THE DUCKBURG TIMES

SPECIAL DUCKTALES ISSUE

The 'DUCKTALES' INDEX

by Joe Torcivia & Chris Barat ©1992

Introduction

Quackaroonies!

There has never been another TV cartoon series quite like Disney's DuckTales--based on the characters and concepts of Carl Barks' Scrooge McDuck adventure tales, but with a style all its own that ranks it at the very head of the finest examples of its genre. Premiering on September 18, 1987, with "Treasure of the Golden Suns", an unprecedented two-hour prime-time syndicated special, and preceded by a blizzard of publicity, the series fulfilled the Disney Company's highest expectations during its first season, breaking all records for viewing audiences for a syndicated cartoon series and attracting adults and children alike with a mixture of adventure, comedy, satire and winning characterization. Donald Duck's absence (he left Huey, Dewey and Louie in Scrooge's care and joined the Navy) was a major break with tradition but proved to have a large benefit: Launchpad McQuack, the daredevil pilot with the crashing habit who joined Scrooge and HD&L as a "star" of the show, proved to be the most intriguing new cartoon character TV had seen in ages. The series' success prompted Disney to add 30 new episodes to the first season's 65, introducing more new characters ("caveduck" Bubba Duck and his dinosaur pal Tootsie, and accountant Fenton Crackshell, alias Gizmoduck, Scrooge's newest money-guardian and defender of Duckburg).

Where did DuckTales begin? With Barks, obviously, but we'd be remiss if we didn't mention some other antecedents. Mickey's Christmas Carol (1983) proved that Scrooge could handle the role of animated "leading man" and marked the first performance of Alan Young as the definitive voice of the old miser. The 20-minute short "Sport Goofy in Soccermania", broadcast on NBC in May of '87 as part of a Goofy cartoon-pastiche special, gave viewers a sneak preview of the DT "house style",

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featured the first animated appearances of the Beagle Boys and Gyro Gearloose and his "helper", and introduced the talented Russi Taylor as the new voice of HD&L. Young, Taylor and Terry McGovern (as Launchpad) have since proven to be the most formidable gang of "star voices" ever to grace a single series...they "are" their characters to a degree that most other series' "stars" can only dream of. Combine superb voicework, excellent animation and graphics, (usually) strong storylines, and a carefree attitude that's seen all too seldom in the commercial world of TV animation, and you begin to grasp the impact that DT has had on audiences...particularly on these two writers.

This index covers the first season of episodes. Since the episodes are still readily available for inspection, we've kept the plot synopses to a minimum and focused on giving you our own comments. In the best Siskel and Ebert tradition, we've individually rated each episode on a scale from **** (on a Barksian level) to CRASH (a wreck worthy of Launchpad himself). We hope that our opinions will help stir up debate among Duck and Disney fans--for if any TV cartoon show ever deserved serious critical analysis, it's this one. For completists, an exhaustive index to the first and second seasons (complete with historical background, critical analyses of the characters, full synopses and voice credits, and other surprises) is available from us--see the last page of this index for more information.

Enjoy!

Index Abbreviations

AD: original air date

D: director(s)

SEd: story editor(s) (Tedd Anasti and Patsy Cameron, except as noted)

S: story

W: writer(s)

TP: teleplay

1st App: indicates a major character's first series appearance; underlined if it's the character's first animated appearance, period

Additional Voices: voice credits (if they can be determined) for major characters other than the ones listed below appearing in the episode

FC: Four Color Comics (Dell)

US: Uncle Scrooge Comics

WDC&S: Walt Disney's Comics and Stories

DD: Donald Duck Comics

Major Character Voices (listed in order of first series appearance)

Scrooge McDuck=Alan Young, Donald Duck=Tony Anselmo, Huey, Dewey and Louie=Russi Taylor, Duckworth=Chuck McCann, Admiral Grimmitz=Peter Cullen, Bigtime Beagle=Frank Welker, Burger Beagle=Chuck McCann, Bouncer Beagle=Chuck McCann, Flintheart Glomgold=Hal Smith, Mrs. Beakley=Joan Gerber, Webigail Vanderquack=Russi Taylor, Gyro Gearloose=Hal Smith, Launchpad McQuack=Terry McGovern, Magica De Spell=June Foray, Poe (Magica's raven)=Frank Welker, Babyface Beagle=Terry McGovern, Doofus=Brian Cummings, Ma Beagle=June Foray, Bankjob Beagle=Peter Cullen, Black Pete=Will Ryan, Baggy Beagle=Frank Welker, Bebop Beagle=Brian Cummings, Gladstone Gander=Rob Paulsen, Glittering Goldie=Joan Gerber

(1) "Treasure of the Golden Suns" Joe=**** Chris=****
AD: 9/18/87 (2-hour "movie" version), 11/9/87-11/13/87 (5-part serial, expanded 2½ hour version)
D: Alan Zaslove (parts 1,3,5), Steve Clark (2), Terence Harrison (4)
SEd: Jymn Magon
W: Jymn Magon, Bruce Talkington, Mark Zaslove
TP: Jymn Magon (1,3), Bruce Talkington (1,3), Mark Zaslove (2,4)
1st App: Scrooge (1), Donald (1), HD&L (1), Duckworth (1) Bigtime Beagle (1), Burger Beagle (1), Bouncer Beagle (1), Admiral Grimmitz (cameo in 1), Flintheart Glomgold (2), Mrs. Beakley (3), Webigail Vanderquack (3), Launchpad McQuack (3), Gyro Gearloose (3)
Additional Voices: "El Capitan"=Jim Cummings, TV Reporter=Russi Taylor, Joaquin Slowly=Peter Cullen, Skittles=Patty Parris, penguin leader=Terry McGovern

This event is unquestionably the biggest in the annals of TV animation. Originally created as a 2½ hour, 5-part serial, the tale was edited down to a 2-hour version for the prime-time debut of DT. The five parts of the serial:

(1) "Don't Give Up the Ship"--Donald, joining the Navy, leaves a reluctant HD&L in the care of Scrooge and his butler Duckworth. After several mishaps, a desperate Scrooge buys the Junior Woodchuck Guidebook from a recruiter to keep the boys out of trouble. A mysterious trenchcoated Spaniard, "El Capitan", breaks the Beagle Boys out of jail and hires them to steal a wooden ship (in reality, a map to a ship full of "sunken treasure") from Scrooge's money-bin museum. Scrooge blames HD&L for the theft, but the boys prove their mettle to him by recovering the ship and returning it to him at his candy factory. The Beagles, buried in chocolate, are captured, but "El Capitan" escapes.

(2) Wrongway in Ronguay"--HD&L trace the "sunken treasure" to the tiny South American country of Ronguay, where they and Scrooge find the populace fleeing--and the expected "sea" a desert. The reason for the mass exodus: the "monsapis", torrential rains that come once a century and flood the desert. Trailed by "El Capitan" and his new partner, Flintheart Glomgold (who's made a bet with Scrooge to see who can make the most money in two weeks), the ducks find the treasure-laden galleon in a mountain gully. The villains capture the ship but sink it when "El Capitan" hysterically attacks Flinty for setting Scrooge adrift with one of "his" coins. Glomgold is saved (and Scrooge's coin wins the contest), but "El Capitan" is lost...or is he?

(3) "Three Ducks of the Condor"--Back home, Scrooge hires Mrs. Betina Beakley to be the boys' nanny (she offers to work for nothing), and agrees to give room and board to her and her granddaughter Webigail. Learning that his coin is from the legendary "Treasure of the Golden Suns", he recruits pilot Launchpad McQuack and Donald (on a 3-day pass) to accompany him to the Andes, where the trio meet the owner of the only other coin extant, "conquistador" Joaquin Slowly, who uses it to control a band of sun-worshipping natives. Scrooge trades his coin to Slowly for half a map to the Valley of the Golden Suns (the other half was "lost at sea"), and the ducks barely survive a treacherous aerial attack by Slowly and his natives--a struggle that ends with Slowly losing his coins and power. Scrooge sets sail to find the missing half of the map.

(4) "Cold Duck"--Launchpad returns to Duckburg for supplies and ends up taking HD&L, Mrs. Beakley and Webby with him to Antarctica, where Scrooge has been traced by a homing device. HD&L and Launchpad discover an underground race of talking penguins who take their clothes (the penguins, perpetually surrounded by black and white, go crazy over colored objects) and throw them in jail to join Scrooge, whose map the penguins also took. Mrs. Beakley recovers the men's clothes and gives them a tuning fork which destroys their prison, while Webby and the shy penguin girl Skittles go to the "Color Museum" to get Scrooge's map--but a huge prehistoric walrus freed from ice by the fork's vibrations destroys the Museum, and the ducks barely escape the walrus and the angry penguins. With Webby's crayon copy of the map in hand, the ducks head for the Valley.

(5) "Too Much of a Gold Thing"--Tracked by "El Capitan", the ducks finally find the Valley, but the boys and Scrooge, maddened by "gold fever", accidentally set off a booby trap while hunting wealth in a huge golden temple. Even as Scrooge and "El Capitan" grapple, the ducks are faced with a scalding death in molten gold. Launchpad rescues them barely in time. The Valley is buried under tons of dirt, and "El Capitan", still gold-happy, begins digging for it all over again. Carrying the gold that sprayed the ducks' plane as it flew over the holocaust, Scrooge and friends fly off into the sunset.

One can hardly do this masterpiece justice in words. If there was ever any doubt that Carl Barks' brand of adventure couldn't survive a transition to TV, "Golden Suns" effectively scotches it. The plotting isn't flawless--it's never explained how "El Capitan" managed to find the ducks' trail again, and how exactly did Mrs. Beakley get the clothes back?--but the story is gripping and absorbing. It's not pure Barks, relying in places on long action sequences short on dialogue, but it's certainly Barksian in its evenly-paced development and clever use of detail. This last is most neatly done in "Cold Duck", probably the best of the individual episodes (though all of them are excellent), with the tuning fork, crayons and Mrs. Beakley's scarf introduced in seemingly extraneous Duckburg gags but all playing key roles in the ducks' triumph. There's even some "domestic comedy" included (Scrooge's handling of the solicitors in "Don't Give Up the Ship", the boys' tuning-fork prank on the women at the start of "Cold Duck").

Need more? How about the first animated appearance of Flintheart Glomgold, here displaying a truly vicious streak and a willingness to do literally anything to become the world's richest duck? (In deference to political tensions, Flinty is presented here as a Scot like Scrooge--complete with kilt, flowing beard and Scottish accent--rather than as a South African.) How about our first "live" looks at Gyro's lab, Scrooge's "worry room" (though it isn't named), and a Beagle raid on the money bin? Most memorable of all, of course, are the debuts of the new made-for-TV characters. Here, character development takes a back seat to story, but all the newcomers are featured at one time or another and acquit themselves well, especially Launchpad; the pilot's doggedness and ineptitude are already in evidence. The serial also benefits hugely from a truly chilling villain. "El Capitan"'s psychotic single-mindedness (he's stayed alive for 400 years through "sheer willpower" while seeking the Valley) is quite reminiscient of the "Scarer" in "Terror of the River" (FC 108, 1946).

Undoubtedly horrifying purists, the Beagle Boys are named and possess distinct character traits. Giving Beagles names has ample precedent in non-Barks stories, of course, and it's difficult not to enjoy the comical antics and clever characterizations of Bigtime (a "brainy" shrimp), Bouncer (large, muscular and dumb), Burger (a chubby chowhound, perhaps inspired by Barks' prune-loving Beagle Boy), and the rest of the DT Beagle clan. As in the Danish Gutenberghus stories, a "quorum" of three Beagle Boys is usually sufficient to "define" them as "The Beagle Boys"; the trio appearing here often match up together, as do Bankjob (huge with jutting chin), Babyface (tiny with flapping shirttail and a helicopter beanie), and Bebop (50's style "beatnik" with beret, "shades", long snout and "hepcat" dialogue). Baggy (slovenly and moronic) is a "swing Beagle", often teaming with the first three.

Some interesting subthemes are built into the basic adventure plot. Throughout much of "Don't Give Up", Scrooge is in his crotchety, "Poor Old Man" mode: he feeds HD&L free cheese samples, doesn't want to get involved with their upbringing and threatens to send them to boarding school. He eventually relents, though, showing his soft side. In a memorable scene in "Ronguay", he expresses despair when faced with the imminent loss of his bet with Glomgold, admitting that he's always feared that "wolves" like Flinty would destroy his empire someday, but HD&L serve as a tower of strength and help him pull through. In "Cold Duck", HD&L loudly protest that you "can't trust a girl!" but are won over by Mrs. Beakley's bravery and resourcefulness. The "gold fever" theme in "Too Much of a Gold Thing" sounds a bit preachy but is still carried off well, with some leavening humor added (Scrooge hiccupping every time he says the word "gold").

Several incidental parodic references show up during the serial, foreshadowing a very strong tendency towards media cross-referencing that will come to be one of DT's most distinctive traits. Launchpad compares himself with Indiana Jones ("A snake! I hate snakes!...No, that's somebody else, I sorta like snakes!") and cries "Warp drive, Scotty!" (the first of a long line of "Star Trek" parodies used by DT), and HD&L reprise the Bugs Bunny/Elmer Fudd cartoons ("By very, very quiet...we're hunting Beakley!"). Especially noticeable here, though, are the "in-jokes" spoofing various established conventions of the Duck comics and cartoons. HD&L try to trick Mrs. B. by pretending to be each other (and fail), Donald's voice is constantly being misunderstood, HD&L brain themselves diving into a mound of gold coins (shades of the Beagles in FC 386!), and Scrooge celebrates his victory over the Beagles in "Don't Give Up" by asking HD&L to "give me four" (the ducks have only four fingers, remember). Even the severest Barks classicists will be pleased to see Scrooge's money-diving routine ("I love to dive around in it like a porpoise...") and his description of how he made his fortune "square", both in "Don't Give Up". All in all, this extravaganza is an experience to be savored again and again--it's a "must" for any Duck fan to have the full serial on tape.

(2) "Send in the Clones" Joe=***½ Chris=***½
AD: 9/21/87 D: Alan Zaslove
S: Astrid Ryterband TP: Ken Koonce, David Wiemers
1st App: Magica De Spell, Poe, Babyface Beagle
Additional Voices: Webra Walters=Joan Gerber

Magica De Spell turns Bigtime, Babyface and Burger into HD&L lookalikes so they can infiltrate the mansion and steal the Old #1 Dime--just in time for HD&L to return home from a movie about clones and Duckweek's Webra Walters to come to interview "Scwooge". In the ensuing chaos, Huey and Mrs. Beakley are taken back to Magica's island stronghold. It takes "the old switcheroo" for Scrooge to recover his beloved dime and family members.

The first half-hour episode is a series high point, featuring a convoluted plot (which may take a few viewings to fully absorb) and the first animated Magica. The slinky sorceress is predictably delightful, though Foray's voice for her, reminiscient of the voice of Natasha Fatale of The Bullwinkle Show, is more Slavic than Italian, a change that may have been made simply to accomodate Foray's talents. A generous pinch of humor ("Sorry, I get carried away!") is added to Magica's usual hysterics. Her raven, Poe (sometimes called Mr. Poe), is reminiscient of the accomplice Ratface of "The Many Faces of Magica De Spell" (US 48, 1964) and several other Magica tales. (However, we are informed that Poe is actually a transformed human...Magica's brother!) Somewhat sadly, the dime Magica lusts after is described as Scrooge's "lucky" dime (a la 60's Barks) rather than simply as the first dime he made--future DT uses of the dime will echo this.

Though it was hinted at in "Golden Suns", Burger's seemingly limitless appetite is really on display for the first time here. Disguised as Huey, he raids Scrooge's icebox and tells his irate "uncle", "I haven't eaten in minutes!" He later gulps down a bowl of ghastly soup Magica/Mrs. Beakly had prepared for HD&L, and, when he is left behind when Magica makes her getaway, Scrooge extracts information about Magica's plans from him by threatening to withhold dinner.

(3) "Sphinx for the Memories" Joe=**½ Chris=**
AD: 9/22/87 D: David Block W: Michael Keyes
Additional Voices: high priest of Garbabel=Peter Cullen, priestess=Marilyn Lightstone, guide=Peter Cullen

Donald, on leave in the Middle East, is shanghaied by emissaries from the land of Garbabel, who intend to use him as a "corporeal receptacle" for the spirit of their ancient king, "The Garbled One" (a twin of Donald), so that he may reign again. In Garbabel, Donald is transformed into the ruthless "Garbled One", while the high priest, stripped of his power, tries to use his tame mummy to destroy him. Scrooge and HD&L ride to the rescue and help Donald regain his "old self"--leaving behind a "demythologized" but wiser Garbabel.

Donald's first major series vehicle, this episode was highly praised by Kim Metzger in The Comics Buyer's Guide for its "Barksian" overtones, but its links to Barks are not really as close as all that. Certainly, Barks would never have built an adventure around Donald's voice. As in "Golden Suns", the voice is the focus of many gags, but here it also serves as the "raison d'etre" of the plot. Keyes deserves credit for a clever idea, but the script as a whole lacks punch. The "menacing" mummy is decidedly unscary, though the scenes in which it attacks the ducks are exciting to watch, and Donald comes off as more of a throwback to the lazy/irascible duck of the 30's cartoons than a reflection of Barks' Everyman. The episode provides a nice opportunity for Donald to star, but it's nothing really special.

Notice the twin monoliths guarding the underground maze--they look very similar to the statutes in the last panel of "The Mummy's Ring" (FC 29, 1943).

(4) "Where No Duck Has Gone Before" Joe=**** Chris=****
AD: 9/23/87 D: David Block SEd: Jymn Magon W: Len Uhley
1st App: Doofus
Additional Voices: Major Courage=Terry McGovern, robot butler=Hamilton Camp, chief Kronk=Hamilton Camp

HD&L and their overweight, nerdish Woodchuck pal Doofus idolize Major Courage, star of a cheesy TV "Space opera", "Courage of the Cosmos", produced by a studio Scrooge has just acquired as payment of a debt. Scrooge hires Gyro to spruce up the set--and Gyro builds a real spacecraft. Hoping to butter up HD&L so his show won't be cancelled, Major Courage takes them, Doofus and a reluctant Launchpad on a "cruise" he and the kids think is phony. When the repulsive Kronks capture the ducks' ship prepatory to conquering Earth, the Major proves to be full of hot air, and it's left to Launchpad to marshal his wits (such as they are) and save the day.

The first episode starring Launchpad (and the first one in which he's allowed to be "himself" rather than simply a stand-in for Donald) is a riotously funny satire of Star Trek and other overwrought sci-fi shows, in which the pilot's fundamental character--that of a "professional hero" unencumbered by his own ineptitude--is illuminated. He completely outdoes the phony Major Courage, not through competence so much as through persistence. He's a flippant descendant of every "wise-guy good guy" Harrison Ford ever played, here teaching the "star-struck" HD&L and Doofus a Barksian lesson in the pretensions of sham. Major Courage proves an ideal foil; he speaks his "lines" in a stilted fashion in a hilarious parody of dramatic sci-fi dialogue ("When it comes to courage, I'm full of it!") and alternates between posturing for the camera, sneering at Launchpad, sucking up to Scrooge and the boys, and cowering in mindless terror. Rarely has a cartoon creation ever been so delightfully hateable.

Doofus' first appearance features one of his best performances, as a kind of Sancho Panza (albeit an uncynical one) to Launchpad's Don Quixote. He delivers the McQuack philosophy in one line: "Real heroes just do their jobs!" The aliens are quite funny, especially a supercilious robot butler. Unlike the more heavy-handed aliens used in some future episodes ("The Right Duck", "Superdoo"), the Kronks greatly augment the wildly satirical nature of the show with their overbaked dialogue and positively gruesome overacting.

References to Star Trek are numerous and add significantly to the episode's zaniness. The shoddy pre-Gyro set of "Courage of the Cosmos" (which, with its toaster communications system, folding "bridge" chairs and hand-cranked backgrounds, would do scant justice to Dr. Who, let alone Gene Roddenberry) features the voice of a "Scottish engineer", and the Kronk ship has a "transporter" device that goes haywire, with Kronk and duck body parts getting switched about rapidly. Major Courage's contract runs 5 years (the intended length of the "Enterprise"'s mission), he has the same last name as the composer of the Star Trek theme (Alexander Courage), and, like William Shatner, he wears a toupee. (For all its phoniness, "Courage of the Cosmos" did best Star Trek in one sense: it lasted 95 episodes, surpassing Lost in Space's 83 and Star Trek's 78, and unofficially making it the longest-running sci-fi program in U.S. TV history.) If the Star Trek digs aren't enough, there are even some passing references to Star Wars: Launchpad mutters, "I got a bad feeling about this", and the

Kronks melt their way through a metal door to get at the ducks. Whether or not you're a sci-fi buff, this episode is a winner all the way--the first proof, since duplicated many times, that DT can handle "wild and crazy" storylines with the same facility it handles Barksian adventure.

(5) "Armstrong" Joe=*** Chris=***
AD: 9/24/87 D: Alan Zaslove W: Michael Keyes
Additional Voices: Armstrong=Peter Cullen

Gyro builds the title character, a super-robot with a computer brain capable of performing any task. Armstrong enchants HD&L while embarrassing Launchpad (beating him decisively in a cross-country air race), but when Scrooge replaces his entire money-bin staff with Armstrong in the hope of bigger profits, the wonder robot goes beserk, taking over Gyro's lab abd creating a remote-controlled electronic empire. HD&L enlist the aid of the despondent Launchpad, who destroys Armstrong's power by crashing his "Joyrider" on the lab roof and short-circuits the robot by accidentally pulling a lever on the plane and dumping a load of water onto it. Scrooge acknowledges that Launchpad "won when it really counted" and admits the need for the human touch.

Pretty good, despite the obvious moral, with the hitherto-unusual situation of a Gearloose creation developing really sinister capabilities when misapplied, rather than merely annoying difficulties, as was the case in most of Barks' Gyro stories. In another nice reminder of Barks' use of "important details", Launchpad's initial appearance in the episode shows him engaged in aerial firefighting; he puts out a blaze accidentally when his scarf catches on the water lever. As in "Where No Duck", a good contrast is made between technology (here science- rather than media-oriented) and old-fashioned derring-do as personified by Launchpad. HD&L's embrace of Armstrong as "the best friend a kid could ever have" seems a bit strange considering that they are usually the ones protecting the "natural order" against technology (as in the ecology-oriented Junior Woodchucks stories of the 70's), but they are impressionable boys, after all (and the robot does do their homework for them).

The show makes passing reference to a pair of TV sci-fi classics. When Armstrong threatens Scrooge in the money bin, the robot's eyes begin to glow red in a sinister fashion and continue to glow after the scene has "faded out"--an effect used in the Star Trek episode "Where No Man Has Gone Before" (1966) to underscore the changes happening to crewman Gary Mitchell as he mutates from a man into a "god". The use of toys to threaten HD&L as they bike to Gyro's lab recalls "The Terrible Toys", a 1966 Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea episode in which some harmless toys become instruments of destruction after being appropriated by a malevolent alien intelligence. Here, though, the toys are more annoying than threatening...HD&L neutralize some toy tanks by turning them upside down!

(6) "Robot Robbers" Joe=*** Chris=***
(Adaptation of "The Giant Robot Robbers" US 58, 1965)
AD: 9/25/87 D: Alan Zaslove S: Carl Barks W: Michael Keyes
1st App: Ma Beagle, Bankjob Beagle
Additional Voices: police chief=Peter Cullen

Gyro builds four giant robots for Glomgold, who wants to steal a march on Scrooge for a construction bid at a bank complex. Ma Beagle (who looks like a conventional Beagle with wig, mascara and dress) gains control of one of the robots, using it to break Bankjob, Babyface and Burger out of jail to run the other three. Scrooge and Glomgold, forced to work together with Launchpad and Gyro, try to drown the robots in the reservoir...only "these robots are waterproof" They finally "short out" three of the robots by overloading switches at the power station when the robots come to "refuel" after their attempt to drill open the money bin has failed, and immobilize the fourth inside the construction-site loading bay with quick-drying cement. Glomgold has to rebuild half the city sans robots--with the "willing" help of Scrooge's construction company.

This is undeniably an historic occasion--the first direct adaptation of a Barks story (with a strange title abridgement)--and, as DT Barks adaptations have gone, it's not bad. Having Scrooge and Glomgold work together is inspired, and having Flinty ultimately responsible for the robots might even be considered an improvement! The Scrooge/Glomgold alliance is strictly mercenary: Flinty growls, "Let's get it over with", while Scrooge admits, "I don't like it any better than you do!" Rest assured, though, Glomgold is the bad guy in this duo (he wants Scrooge to pay for the repair of the robots when they're sunk in the reservoir--talk about "chutzpah"), and he gets his in the end. For his part, Scrooge adheres to the Barksian philosophy he expressed in the original ("Oh, my soul and pocketbook! That thing just shouldn't be allowed!"), and, of course, he's eventually proven right.

Where the episode falls a bit short is in the extreme mildness of the robots' attack on the money bin. Gone is the memorable scene in which the robots "slam-dunk" the bin, giving the ducks inside the shaking of their lives. This would have made a tremendous scene in animation, though the climax in the loading bay is still good. Considering that Barks probably "self-censored" the amount of violent action he put into the original in reaction to Western Publishing's increasing restraints on violence, the adaptation misses a unique chance to make the robots' "reign of terror" really terrifying.

Ma Beagle's debut gives her a large part--Foray voices her in the "Witch Hazel"/"Grammi Gummi" mode. The Duckburg police chief is a physical replica of Chief O'Hara, though he hasn't a trace of an Irish brogue; he also appears in "Ducky Horror Picture Show" and several second-season episodes.

(7) "Magica's Shadow War" Joe=*** Chris=***
AD: 9/28/87 D: David Block W: Randy Lofficier

Magica animates her shadow and sends it to steal Old #1, but the shadow transforms itself into a "super-shadow", imprisons Magica and plans to steal Old #1 as part of its own plot to free all the shadows in the world "and make you people our slaves!" Poe persuades Scrooge to free Magica, but Scrooge angrily refuses to help her destroy the shadow because she demands Old #1 as part of her anti-shadow spell. His attempt to "zap" the shadow with the lights of Duckburg Stadium only causes it to multiply. Scrooge finally relents, and Magica cooks up her spell inside the money bin. The smaller shadows are destroyed, and HD&L dispatch the "super-shadow" with a flash from their "Woodchuck Camera" (an earlier present to them from Gyro). Magica tries to escape with the dime but is scared into dropping it by a giant image of her shadow--created by HD&L.

What's even more improbable than a Scrooge/Glomgold teamup? Undoubtedly this one. It's so unnatural to Scrooge that he can hardly blurt the words "I'm sorry" when apologizing to Magica (even as he does so, he can't look her in the eye). Due to the paranormal nature of the opposition, though, the outlandish premise seems palatable...and the results are delightful. This would be Magica's last DT appearance for some time (until "Raiders of the Lost Harp") and is one of her all-time best by any reckoning, highlighting her twisted sense of pride (she rebukes her shadow for wanting to be free to do evil on its own because "there is only room in this world for one Magica De Spell") and giving her some classically hammy dialogue. Though only one person is given writing credit, the episode is actually the product of a husband-and-wife team, Randy and Jean-Marc Lofficier, who've written for the comics (Action, Arak, Teen Titans, Blue Beetle) and TV (several episodes of The Real Ghostbusters).

An odd debut here is that of Vacation van Hump, a Hawaiian-shirted, sunglassed goose vaguely resembling Gus whom Magica bumps into at Duckburg Airport. A "perpetual travler" a la St. Paul, he has several other "walk-on" roles during the first season.

Disney movie reference: during one of Magica's spells, Poe hides inside a skull, mimicking the Queen's raven in Snow White (1937).

(8) "Master of the Djinni" Joe=**** Chris=***½
AD: 9/29/87 D: Alan Zaslove W: Sam Joseph, Manette Beth Rosen
Additional Voices: genie=Howard Morris, Glomgold's henchman=Roger C. Carmel, Sultan=Roger C. Carmel, Schewebazade=Joan Gerber, Emir of Somnambula=Roger C. Carmel

Scrooge and HD&L race Glomgold to find the Vault of Aladdin and the magic lamp inside. Reaching the Vault at the same time, the two old ducks grapple and accidentally free the genie of the lamp. Since they rubbed the lamp together, the genie decides that the lamp's 3 wishes will belong to whoever wins a race to the Duckburg Ice Cream Parlor. Enjoying the "good life" while waiting at Scrooge's mansion, the genie "zaps" the two contestants into ancient times so that the race will never end. Scrooge and Glomgold are held as spies by the Sultan of a desert kingdom but are saved by the beautiful Schewebazade and her uncanny knack for putting people to sleep with her stories. In Duckburg, Webby tricks the genie back into the lamp, and the kids force him to return Scrooge and Glomgold to modern times. Flinty unfairly wins the race but botches his wishing so badly that the story ends up starting anew, with the ducks racing for the lamp as before...only this time, the lamp is buried by a cave-in and lost for good.

This tale stands apart because of the "reverse-English" ending. Though it might be considered a "cheater" (since some animation from the show's beginning is reused at the end), the gimmick shows considerable ingenuity. What really makes this one good, though, is its unmistakably Barksian approach. The use of Scrooge and Glomgold together is magnificent; the two rivals shift from bickering to reluctant cooperation (as in "Robot Robbers") and back again without any grinding of gears. Their "drag act" in the Sultan's harem is a riot, with the disguised Scrooge telling the Sultan that the "new arrivals" were acquired as part of a "two-for-one sale". The source material is used imaginatively, the effects of Schewebazade's tale-spinning being a clever twist on 1001 Arabian Nights, in which Scheherazade had to tell entertaining stories to save her neck. Glomgold's "accidental wishing" (wishing to "see the expression on Scrooge's face" after he wishes him onto a desert island and then wishing that the ducks had never found the lamp) is a familiar idea, but few DT scripts capture the true Barksian spirit to the extent that this one does--especially since the race for the lamp ends with no winner, as so many of Barks' treasure hunts did.

Roger C. Carmel died on November 11, 1986...an indication of how long DT was in production prior to its debut. Best remembered as the roguish Harry Mudd, who bedeviled the "Enterprise" crew in several live and animated Star Trek episodes, he also appeared as a villainous adversary of such heroes as Batman, the Green Hornet, and the crew of Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea's submarine "Seaview". Strange that his last "good-guy opponent" should turn out to be Scrooge McDuck.

(9) "Hotel Strangeduck" Joe=** Chris=**
AD: 9/30/87 D: Alan Zaslove W: Richard Merwin
Additional Voices: Duchess of Swansylvania=Joan Gerber, Benzino Gassolini=Gino Conforti, Bernardo=Chuck McCann, Ludwig von Strangeduck=Arte Johnson

Scrooge buys a Swansylvanian castle formerly owned by the eccentric Dr. Ludwig von Strangeduck (whose ghost supposedly haunts the place) and plans to convert it into a luxury hotel with his family's help. On opening day, three guests check in: the slinky Duchess of Swansylvania, the Italian "playhog" Benzino Gassolini, and an invisible "phantom" who signs in using Strangeduck's name--and later tries to axe Scrooge to death at the dinner table. The "phantom" proves to be Strangeduck's former assistant, Bernardo, who'd been searching for Strangeduck's book of fantastic scientific formulae. Strangeduck (who'd been lurking about in a corny ghost outfit) suddenly comes on the scene, and Scrooge strikes a deal with him and the Duchess (who's really Strangeduck's sister) to market his inventions.

There are very strong similarities between this tale and "The Old Castle's Secret" (FC 189, 1947) (a mysterious castle with a "ghost problem", invisibility spray, HD&L's graveyard search). Despite the uneasy feeling that Barks' plot has been "hijacked" to serve a different purpose, the mixture of the "haunted castle"

theme with a touch of "Grand Hotel" (multiple eccentric characters) is fairly enjoyable, even though the script is rather weak. HD&L speculate that "Benzino's never around when the ghost is", forgetting that he was present when the "phantom" attacked Scrooge, and the "plot" has little momentum, seeming more like a string of vignettes patched together.

Gassolini appears to be a one-shot character, since he's used only as a source for gags, but see "Top Duck" for a surprising second featured appearance (also in a Merwin script). The Duchess is a pretty obvious parody of Zsa Zsa Gabor; she's had cameos in several other episodes.

(10) "Lost Crown of Genghis Khan" Joe=*** Chris=***
(Adaptation of "The Lost Crown of Genghis Khan", US 14, 1956)
AD: 10/1/87 D: Alan Zaslove TP: Carl Barks W: Anthony Adams
1st App: Black Pete (cameo)
Additional Voices: Lord Battmounten=Chuck McCann, Percival-Chuck McCann, Sir Guy Standforth=Pat Fraley

Scrooge and other Duckburgian adventurers journey to the Himalayas in search of the Crown, with the one who returns with it to be named "Explorer of the Year' by the Explorers' Club. The unscrupulous Sir Guy Standforth sabotages the other contestants and Scrooge's plane, which crashes in Shadow Pass, home of the legendary Abominable Snowman, with Launchpad, HD&L and Webby aboard. Webby is captured by the Snowman, and the other ducks track the beast to its icy lair (where the Crown was last seen) but are chased by it and become separated. Launchpad and HD&L tumble down an ice slide and wind up frozen and lost, and Scrooge finds the Crown but is "snowballed" by the Snowman. Launchpad and HD&L are found by Webby and discover that the Snowman is actually an affectionate female fond of making snowcones. The unfrozen Scrooge abuses "Snowy", who runs off and falls off an icy bridge, to be rescued by Launchpad--whom she amorously starts chasing. Sir Guy steals the Crown from Scrooge and returns with it to Duckburg, where he's about to be crowned "Explorer of the Year"--until Scrooge, Launchpad and "Snowy" show up.

One's taste for this will probably depend upon one's interpretation of "literary license". Some extra business is tacked onto Barks' basically simple plot, and "Gu" is given a sex change (and rather stereotyped female "habits" like cooking and jewelry-wearing), but the basic framework of Barks' story remains. The ducks' journey to the Snowman's lair is not up to the original, but the pace really picks up in the ice caves. Many of the episode's visual elements are of an exceptionally high quality: the ice-slide sequence is superbly done, the ice-cave surroundings are outstanding (the characters' reflections are shown as they pass behind ice pillars, an eye-catching effect), and a wall of the Explorers' Club headquarters is decorated with Barksian gag pictures recounting the members' past exploits. Why Barks received "teleplay" credit is a mystery (at this stage of his life, writing a TV teleplay is about the last thing he'd want to do), but, even with the changes, this adaptation is quite enjoyable.

The Explorers' Club plays a key role in only one other first-season episode, "Pearl of Wisdom". It's a shame that it hasn't been used more often--it could serve as a springboard to any number of adventures, and there are some promising characters among its members. Lord Battmounten is the very picture of the "veddy-British" explorer, and his name was chosen with Barksian care (Lord Mountbatten, similarities to "badminton" and "bad mountain"--a peril an explorer would surely face). Notable too is Percival, a fat but game explorer who climbs mountains simply "because I'm there". Both Lord B. and Percival have made frequent appearances in crowd scenes in other episodes.

Black Pete makes his first series appearance in the historical-flashback prologue, in costume as a Mongol caravan leader; the "real" Pete's debut would have to wait until "Pearl of Wisdom". Webby's most endearing and self-defining trait, her kindness to animals, is put on display for the first time here. The chance to showcase her almost aggressive cuteness was certainly a major reason for the Snowman's sex change.

(11) "Duckman of Aquatraz" Joe=* Chris=*½
AD: 10/2/87 D: Steve Clark W: Francis Ross
Additional Voices: Mad Dog McGurk=Peter Cullen, warden of Aquatraz=Hal Smith, Mrs. McGurk=Joan Gerber, Glomgold's lawyer=Ed Gilbert

Glomgold frames Scrooge for the theft of his painting, Piquacko's "Duck a L'Orange", on the basis of a security videotape from his art gallery which shows Scrooge stealing the painting. On the prison island of Aquatraz, Scrooge runs afoul of his nasty cellmate, Mad Dog McGurk, who "hates rich ducks". On visiting day, Scrooge's family softens McGurk with kindness, and when Scrooge has Mad Dog's mother brought in to visit, the grateful McGurk befriends him and takes him with him on a daring escape attempt. Reviewing the videotape, HD&L discover that Glomgold had disguised himself as Scrooge and faked the robbery. Glomgold is sentenced to have Scrooge's portrait hang over his mantel for 15 years.

Pass the molasses, please. This stickily sentimental "prison drama" takes the "good Scrooge"/"bad Glomgold" idea to its ultimate height (or depth). No chance to yank heartstrings is missed, from McGurk's tearful reunion with his "mudder" to the escape sequence, which admittedly is quite dramatic in places (at one point, Scrooge heroically rescues McGurk, who outweighs him by something like 5 to 1, when the latter bumps his head on a rock and nearly drowns). Of course, McGurk turns out to have been innocent all along; he'd been framed by--you guessed it--Glomgold. The episode has its moments but is too cliche-ridden to be judged a success.

The legal aspects of this episode are, to put it charitably, debatable. As Robert Ingersoll correctly points out in his "The Law is an Ass" column in The Comics Buyer's Guide 747, Glomgold is obviously guilty of perjury and falsification, both felonies, and therefore, his "sentence" is laughable (though Flinty might consider it cruel and inhuman punishment). It's also peculiar that Scrooge doesn't seem to have a lawyer conducting his defense (the only attorney in sight is Glomgold's), and that HD&L, sharp as they are, would discover the viedotape ruse when a full-dress court inquiry--which supposedly involved multiple tape-viewings--had failed to. Perhaps the Duckburg legal system just had a bad day.

(12) "The Money Vanishes" Joe=** Chris=*½
AD: 10/5/87 D: Steve Clark W: David Schwartz
1st App: Baggy Beagle, Gyro's "helper"

Gyro's "furniture-mover ray", which can materialize an object at any spot the user chooses if the object is treated with a special spray, is stolen by Bigtime, Bouncer, Burger and Baggy, who use a phony TV commercial to convince Scrooge that cash-eating "money moths" are invading Duckburg and "move" Scrooge's cash into their dilapidated lair after Scrooge uses the spray on his money as an anti-moth "treatment". After a slapstick chase through Duckburg packed with "materializing" sight gags, HD&L get possession of the ray and "zap" the Beagles back into jail and Scrooge's money back to the money bin.

This is the kind of story that helped kill off the Whitman comics. The plot, such as it is, is exceptionally slight and fairly absurd, reminiscient of the farcical Vic Lockman-scripted stories in the Beagle Boys comics of the 60's and 70's. As in Lockman's tales, the Beagles come across as buffoons, and their bungling and mugging rather upstage the rest of the episode. The chase sequence features a catchy, jazzy music score, but it takes up a full third of the episode, leading one to suspect that it was designed to "stretch" a story that could really have been told in less than 10 minutes. The only real highlights are the appearance of Gyro's "helper" (whom Gyro, for some reason, calls "Little Bulb") and the phony TV commercial that fools Scrooge, a funny spoof of the countless "K-Tel/slicer-dicer" commercials plaguing American TV viewers.

The credibility of some plot elements is rather low. As the Beagles pursue HD&L, an "ex machina" cloud of spray follows them and settles on animals, people and so forth in a very non-random way...one doesn't have to understand the "gas laws" to recognize the phoniness involved here. The amount of gullibility exhibited by Scrooge

and Gyro is almost mind-boggling; neither of them notice that the "disguised" Beagles are still wearing their masks and prison numbers, and Scrooge doesn't seem to realize that no moth alive could eat metal money! (Perhaps he was still recovering from his harrowing jail stay of the previous episode--in fact, he does seem a bit more nervous and vulnerable than usual.)

(13) "Sir Gyro de Gearloose" Joe=**** Chris=****
AD: 10/6/87 D: Steve Clark W: Mark Zaslove
Additional Voices: King Artie=Richard Erdman, Moorloon=Barry Dennen, Black Knight=Barry Dennen, Lesdred=Peter Cullen

Wearying of his standing as a "gadgetman" and besieged by customers demanding repairs, Gyro builds a "time tub", enabling him to journey back to "the past that might have been", and travels with HD&L to the medieval kingdom of Quackalot, anxious to see if he would have made a worthy knight. While "Sir Gyro de Gearloose" fascinates the court of King Artie with his "scientific magic" and (ineptly) practices his knight-errantry, the madly jealous royal wizard, Moorloon, strikes a deal with Artie's evil nephew Lesdred, who wants the throne of Quackalot, to get rid of him. Using the information Moorloon gives him to stage an invasion, Lesdred jails Moorloon and HD&L, who escape just in time to see Quackalot fall. Gyro and Moorloon use a huge electromagnet powered by a magical thunderstorm to neutralize Lesdred's armored legions and save the day. Gyro returns to Duckburg, realizing that his true metier lies in his "gadgets".

Much more than a simple showcase for Gyro, this superb episode does what one might have thought impossible--it actually expands upon Barks' characterization of the gawky inventor. As Andrew Lendacky points out in "Slang in the Stories of Carl Barks" (TDT 21), the Gyro four-pagers in Uncle Scrooge did not focus that much on the inner workings of Gyro's soul, instead revolving around "the mishaps of being a working inventor, the screwball...customers Gyro dealt with, or the...interactions between Gyro and his 'helper' and the intruding outside world." Here, Gyro himself is the main focus, revealing the "frustrated romantic" side of his personality. Barks had Gyro renounce his inventions in "Man Vs. Machine" (US 47, 1963), but in that case, Gyro didn't really have a well-defined goal in mind, as he does here--he simply wanted to "get away from it all". Though part romantic, it seems, Gyro also possesses the wisdom to realize that "a cobbler should stick to his last".

It's hard to watch this episode without flashing back to Barks' tale of the "suppressed desire" party in WDC&S 198 (1957). In this episode, though, rather than "modernism" bowing to "romance" as in Barks' story, the two worldviews compromise, with each realizing the other's value. Moorloon, a Teutonic-accented blend of Ludwig von Drake and Gyro himself, is wonderfully characterized as a representative of "romance". Arthur C. Clarke's statement that "any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic" certainly applies to Moorloon's reaction to Gyro's "wizardry",which is taken for granted in Gyro's time...just as Moorloon is taken for granted in his. The soft-pedaled moral is leavened by some good slapstick, especially the hilarious scene of Gyro learning how to joust. This is, without question, the best Gyro story ever done, and a "must" for every Duck fan's collection.

(14) "Dinosaur Ducks" Joe=*** Chris=***
AD: 10/7/87 D: Alan Zaslove W: Ken Koonce, David Wiemers

While trying to capture a "booby bird" for Scrooge's zoo, Launchpad crashes into a "Lost World" of dinosaurs. He crawls back to Duckburg (literally!) and tells Scrooge, who plans an expedition for specimens. Taking along Webby and HD&L as stowaways, Scrooge and Launchpad fly to, and crash in, the "Lost World". HD&L are ejected and land in the jungle, where they unsuccessfully try to capture a baby dinosaur. Scrooge and Launchpad are captured by "caveducks", leaving Webby behind. Webby befriends the baby dino and convinces HD&L that it should remain in its "home". The boys rescue Scrooge and Launchpad from the "caveducks", but Webby is captured. Scrooge intends to take the baby dino back to Duckburg but relents after trading his hat, which the "caveduck" chief prizes, for Webby. He still makes a profit, though... "bringing Duckburg to the dinosaurs" via "McDuck's Dinosaurfari" helicopter shuttle.

Compare Floyd Gottfredson's 1941 Mickey Mouse daily strip sequence, "MM on Cave-Man Island" (A.K.A. "Land of Long Ago"), and Barks' "Forbidden Valley" (DD 54, 1957) for other Disney treatments of the "lost prehistoric world" idea, worked over many times since Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's The Lost World (1912). Interestingly, "Cave-Man Island" also features the taking-dinosaurs-out theme, but it's far more violent than this fairly innocuous tale (Mickey and Goofy are lucky to escape with their skins, let alone any specimens!). Both "Cave-Man Island" and this episode also commit the familiar "prehistoric fallacy", allowing "cavemen" to coexist with dinosaurs. Here, though, the mistake may have some "logic", since the "caveducks" are animals themselves...and the little dinosaur that HD&L try to capture has a distinctively ducklike face. Despite the familiar trappings, the episode is most enjoyable, helped along by some lively action scenes. It also marks the first story by the team of Koonce and Wiemers, who helped create Launchpad, Webby and Mrs. Beakley and have had a huge influence on the general direction of DT writing (becoming co-producers and story editors in the second season).

The general success of this episode was certainly a contributing factor to the development of Bubba Duck and Tootsie for the second season. The little dino, whose winning cuteness practically steals the show, is a proto-Tootsie by any other name, and the vast potential for "caveduck" gags, only hinted at here, must have been too tempting for the DT crew to pass up.

(15) "Hero for Hire" Joe=**** Chris=****
AD: 10/8/87 D: Steve Clark W: Ken Koonce, David Wiemers
1st App: Bebop Beagle (unnamed here)

Fired by Scrooge for accidentally destroying Scrooge's new "Beagle-proof" bank, Launchpad takes Doofus' advice and sets himself up in business as a "hero for hire". Ma Beagle, Bankjob, Babyface and Bebop, posing as "Bighouse Productions", hire him to be a costumed hero, "The Webbed Wonder", in a "movie" which is actually a front for a series of bank thefts. Filmed "rescuing" money from "unsafe" banks, Launchpad becomes a wanted criminal. When he gets wise, the Beagles kidnap Doofus. Surrounded by the cops and a contrite Scrooge at the Beagles' "studio" (their lair), Launchpad fakes a helicopter crash to cover his trail and tracks the Beagles down with Gyro's "anti-Beagle alarm". A wild car chase through Duckburg ends with Launchpad crashing the truck containing the stolen money into the police station. Scrooge agrees to hire him back--at half of his previous salary.

This utterly brilliant episode is a near-perfect vehicle for Launchpad's peculiar "Weltanschauung". Having shown great promise in earlier starring roles, the pilot is revealed "whole" here, with all the facets of his personality being examined, running the gamut from his incompetence and delusions of grandeur to his concern for others, his bravery, and his almost-noble sense of justice and fair play. Along with the later "Top Duck", this episode goes the furthest towards laying the foundation of the "McQuack mythos"--it's easily the equal of anything Barks did involving character development.

The obvious "caped superhero" parodies aside, the "hero-for-hire" idea smacks somewhat of the Barks ten-pagers featuring Donald as an expert in some field or other, with his downfall caused by over-confidence. Here, Launcpad goes in the opposite direction, so to speak; the harder he tries to be an "incorporated hero", the worse he does, and his ultimate triumph is partially due to bad driving. What causes us to sympathize with him is his dogged willingness to track down the bad guys. In the tradition of Roger Ramjet and Dudley Do-Right, he may be a klutz, but he's an heroic one. The resemblance to "Super Goof" is remarkable...the more heavy-handed attempt to parody the "Pajamaaed Protector" in the next episode pales in comparison.

On a deeper level, the episode conducts an "in-the-field" experiment in what really makes a hero (as "Where No Duck" did to an extent). The foolishness of attempts to "package" heroism and the phoniness of media creations who spout noble lines and act according to the "popular image" of a hero is contrasted with the simple desire to see justice done that must motivate a true hero. In his attempt to

"prove himself" to an apathetic public, Launchpad covers the stumbling humanity of his true nature with a superhero's garish cowl and pompous attitude, convinced that he can merge the two. Before he can triumph, he must symbolically destroy his "Webbed Wonder" costume and revert to his true self. The contrast between image and reality is heightened by the many obvious disguises appearing in the episode (the Beagles disguising Doofus as a lamp, the Beagles' several costume changes, and Ma Beagle's inclusion of escape tools in cakes and pies for her boys in jail). This "multilevel" structure lifts the episode onto a plane with some of Barks' finest work.

The "Duckburg Bay Bridge", into which Launchpad crashes his copter, is no stranger to other DT episodes. It was first named in "Duckman of Aquatraz" and can be seen in the background of many other episodes. (The prototype for the Bridge, the "Duck Bay Bridge", actually first appeared in "Super Goof Meets Super Thief" (Super Goof 4, 1966)). How many other cartoon cities (including Barks' Duckburg) are given this amount of consistency of detail?

(16) "Superdoo!" Joe=**½ Chris=*½
AD: 10/9/87 D: Steve Clark W: Michael Keyes
Additional Voices: pig Woodchuck=Richard Beals, purple alien=Peter Cullen, green alien=Brian Cummings

Two bumbling alien criminals ditch their stolen "energy crystal" in a ravine near Camp Woodchuck. When Doofus, lagging behind in a merit-badge competition, finds the crystal, he gains superpowers and has soon won every merit badge in sight. When a forest fire and burst dam (results of bungled attempts by the aliens to recover the crystal) threaten the camp, Doofus disguises himself as a superhero, "Superdoo", and saves the day, but he soon discovers that his friends liked the clumsy, inept and nicer Doofus better. Lonesome and unhappy, Doofus throws his "magic donut" away and promptly saves the other Woodchucks from a pair of timberwolves using his own brains.

Would you believe Launchpad as a superefficient Woodchuck leader...and the all-time merit-badge champion, to boot? That's just one of the many problems with this episode. Total collapse is averted only by a few details: the "moral" (which Doofus expounds on a la "He-Man") gets some points for sincerity, and the aliens, while even cornier than those in "Where No Duck" (they talk in Yoda-style "reverse sentences", and one sounds like Johnny Carson's comedic afternoon-movie host, the other vaguely like Kermit the Frog), provide some decent slapstick counterpoint. The episode's main failing is its centerpiece, the klutz as superhero parody of "Super Goof". The entire idea behind "Super Goof" is misinterpreted--Doofus becomes atypically sneaky, arrogant and malicious when he gains his powers, something Goofy would never have dreamt of doing. The failed parody lays bare Doofus' major limitation: he's effective when serving as a "Greek chorous" for Launchpad but is too hapless and unattractive a character to be entirely successful on his own. The episode is an interesting misfire, but a misfire nonetheless.

As "Superdoo", Doofus goes Clark Kent one better by using an outhouse as his changing place. His costume, a melange of long underwear and a Woodchuck blanket, clearly reflects his relation to "Super Goof".

(17) "Maid of the Myth" Joe=*** Chris=***
AD: 10/12/87 D: Alan Zaslove W: Anthony Adams
Additional Voices: Auric=William Callaway, Griselda=Tress MacNeille, shepherd girl=Tress MacNeille

While Mrs. Beakley, clad in Viking regalia, is performing as the diva in a charity opera, a band of Vikings plunder Duckburg. Auric, the Viking leader, hears Mrs. B.'s dulcet tones and kidnaps her from the stage. Pursuing, Scrooge, Launchpad, HD&L and Webby find the Vikings' lair, Valhalla, an island heated by hot springs and shielded by ice cliffs. The ducks' freedom hangs on a chariot race between Launchpad and Thor, the Vikings' champion. A lovely shepherd girl whom Launchpad's befriended gives him her racing rams and teaches him the racing commands, but on race day, he drinks water doped by Auric's jealous queen Griselda, who intended it for Mrs. B., and loses his voice. Mrs. B. takes his place and survives Thor's sabotage attempts to win the race.

This is certainly a "spiritual cousin" of "Mythic Mystery" (US 34, 1961), though Barks is not credited for the basic idea of a remote (here, Earthbound) stronghold named Valhalla and populated by beings having the names of ancient gods. (No cultural mixing here, though; Roman and Greek names are absent.) The episode is much more prosaic than Barks' fanciful, flippant and often absurd original, but there are enough parallel circumstances (such as Donald and Launchpad both becoming involved with female inhabitants) to make it seem plausible that Adams referenced or remembered the earlier story. He may also have borrowed the idea of a contest between the Vikings and the "Outsiders" from the Lost in Space episode "The Space Vikings" (1967), which, like "Mythic Mystery", depicts Valhalla as a planetary body and the "gods" as aliens. By and large, Adams' use of the Valhalla theme is better than Barks'--though it lacks Barks' sense of "history" (myths explained as the result of Earthmens' meetings with Valhallans), it eliminates Barks' rather sour satire in favor of more action, with considerable success (especially in the chariot-race scene).

(18) "Down and Out in Duckburg" Joe=* Chris=**
(Adaptation of "The Horseradish Story", FC 495, 1953)
AD: 10/13/87 D: Terence Harrison SEd: Jymn Magon
W: Ken Koonce, David Wiemers
Additional Voices: Robin Lurch=Rob Paulsen

As selfish Scrooge watches his favorite TV show, Lifestyles of the Filthy Rich, Fritter O'Way (a fox bearing a slight resemblance to Chisel McSue) barges in and reveals the long-dormant contract in which Scrooge's ancestor Seafoam "promised" Fritter's ancestor all his possessions if he failed to deliver a barrel of marbles to the Cape of No Hope. Seafoam's ship sank in a storm, leaving him with only a gold watch. Since Scrooge no longer has the watch, Fritter takes over the mansion, spending Scrooge's money left and right. Scrooge and his family are soon living the "lifestyle of the poor and pathetic" in a Duckburg underpass. With the help of Captain Jack (who'd earlier been given the brushoff by Scrooge in his request for money to repair his boat), Scrooge recovers the marbles and finally "delivers" them to Fritter. Scrooge decides to treat the poor better from now on--he even gives Fritter a menial job.

It's almost a blessing that Barks didn't get story credit here. One of his most exciting Scrooge tales is transformed into a strange mixture of media parody, corny action gags and "preachy" banality. The detail changes are bad enough ("Fritter O'Way"? marbles?), but Koonce and Wiemers' biggest blunder is simply what they chose to focus on. Cutting the ducks' salvage adventure to a minimum (and turning what little action there is into slapstick), they fill the middle of the episode with a dream of Scrooge's in which he's being given a "Lifestyles" interview in his new "home". As a set piece, the parody isn't bad, coming complete with unctuous announcer Robin Lurch and some funny spoofs of the real show's "oohs and ahhs" at wealthy lifestyles (describing the ducks' "Ba-roke" cardboard-box living quarters, Duckworth informes Lurch that "Mr. McDuck has spared all expense...this is the finest cardboard money can't buy"); it simply doesn't belong in this story, though. Koonce and Wiemers would later become quite adept at mixing adventure and parody--here, it's obvious they're still learning.

The "Golden Rule" theme (Scrooge learning to treat the poor with respect) is commendable in principle, but it raises the saccharine level of the episode something awful. Scrooge's pauperization is obviously designed to force him to live up to the consequences of his stinginess, but half the fun of the original was imagining what Chisel had planned for Scrooge's fortune. Barksian cynicism seems to fit this storyline better than 80's "relevancy", anyway. All in all, there's not much tang to this "horseradish story".

(19) "Much Ado About Scrooge" Joe=**** Chris=****
AD: 10/14/87 D: David Block W: Karen Willson, Chris Weber
Additional Voices: Filler Brushbill=Charles Adler, flagship captain=Will Ryan, "Caesar"=Will Ryan

In a load of junk sold to them by "super-salesman" Filler Brushbill, HD&L and Scrooge discover a note by William Drakespeare revealing the existence of Drakespeare's unpublished (and bad) first play. Followed and eventually joined by Brushbill (who found the note when it blew out of Scrooge's limo), the ducks sail to Drakespeare's "haunted" island of Great Written, where they're menaced by "ghosts" of Drakespearian characters who turn out to be descendants of the "Bird"'s acting troupe. The lost play, "McDuck", turns out to be a decidedly unfunny comedy about a Scottish miser. Brushbill steals the play, but Louie convinces him to return it by appealing to his "reputation for honesty". "McDuck" is re-hidden for good, and Scrooge hires the Drakespearians to perform for mainlanders...and Brushbill to sell the tickets.

This excellent, imaginative episode contains all the flair of a Barks treasure hunt and mixes in some subtle satire of the "Shakespeare industry" (festivals, the Stratford-On-Avon tourist trade, and all the rest). Who better to run such an industry than character lookalikes who speak Elizabethan dialect, quote the plays in normal conversation, and have essentially "become" the poet's great creations? Talk about life imitating art. The various character parodies (witches from "MacBeth", "Caesar", "Pluck", a wood full of talking and mobile trees) are remarkably unforced, seeming a natural consequence of the spooky atmosphere of Great Written...and, in a refreshing display of educational subtlety, the plays in which the characters appeared are never identified, exactly as Barks would have done it had he written this tale.

Brushbill could almost be a cousin of Gladstone; his loud clothes, brash manner, uncanny "sale-ability" and luck in finding Drakespeare's note all recall facets of the lucky gander's character. The basic plot is quite similar to that of "Secret of Hondorica" (DD 46, 1956), which featured Gladstone prominently. It leads one to wonder--was Gladstone originally slated for the Brushbill role, and if so, why wasn't he used? (Perhaps because it was felt Gladstone needed to be "introduced" in a special episode, as he would eventually be in "Dime Enough for Luck"?)

(20) "Top Duck" Joe=**** Chris=****
AD: 10/15/87 D: Alan Zaslove W: Richard Merwin
Additional Voices: Ripcord McQuack=Robert Ridgely, Birdy McQuack=Russi Taylor, Loopy McQuack=B.J. Ward, Bomber Beagle=Robert Ridgely, Benzino Gassolini=Gino Conforti

When Duckburg hosts an air show, Launchpad hopes to make his stunt-flying family, "The Flying McQuacks" (father Ripcord, mother Birdy and "valley girl" sister Loopy), proud of him by flying Scrooge's new mining plane, the "McX". Burger, Bouncer and their flyboy brother Bomber force Launchpad to crash, pose as mechanics and convince Scrooge to let them repair the "McX". Bomber and Bouncer use the "McX"'s "ultrasonic digger" to open the money bin and vacuum out Scrooge's cash, but Launchpad, the McQuack family, HD&L, Benzino Gassolini and Scrooge fly in just in time, and in the ensuing air battle, Launchpad performs the "triple-decker treetop bebop tuck-and-roll" stunt to save Scrooge when he falls out of Benzino's plane. Launchpad learns that his family has always been proud of him--he just never gave them a chance to say so!

This is the McQuack version of "Only a Poor Old Man" (FC 386, 1951), revealing some of Launchpad's past and the possible sources of some of his most basic "drives"--and a memorable episode it is. It's clear that Launchpad's derring-do is at least partially caused by an overcompensated inferiority complex. In a flashback, he tells HD&L that he left home after his crash made a hash of a difficult family stunt. He's intimidated by his father (a John Wayne clone), and his bravery and pride in surviving crashes are obviously products of the never-ending struggle to prove his manhood. He displays a previously-unseen fatalism about his propensity to crash, sighing, "The ground and I are like two irresistible forces--destined to keep meeting again and again!" Launchpad's compassion is also revealed to be a driving force in his personality--he can perform a near-impossible stunt when the life of a friend is at stake. It's simply impossible to label Launchpad a "one-dimensional" character after "Hero for Hire" and this episode.

Launchpad's relatives are featured only briefly, but they show promise for potential future appearances. The reappearance of Gassolini (described as a "champion race-car driver" in "Hotel Strangeduck" and as an "air ace" here) is a major surprise. Merely a focus for gags in "Hotel", Benzino actively helps the ducks in this episode. Perhaps Merwin has Italian relatives?

(21) "Pearl of Wisdom" Joe=**** Chris=***½
AD: 10/16/87 D: Steve Clark W: Michael Keyes
Additional Voices: Yardarm=Hal Smith, chief of Banana Island=Hal Smith, flagship captain=Will Ryan

Black Pete (called "Sharky" here) and his pal Yardarm steal a giant pearl from the natives of Banana Island. Pete sells the pearl to Scrooge, but Yardarm reads that the pearl is the legendary "Pearl of Wisdom", which, if held at sunrise on the beach of Banana Island, will supposedly give the holder temporarily-infinite wisdom. Scrooge learns of the pearl's legend at the Explorer's Club but finds it gone when he comes home--Webby has taken it to use as a "masher" at a marbles tournament. The villains swipe the pearl back and, pursued by Scrooge's flagship, reach Banana Island, where Scrooge and Pete grapple for the pearl on the beach at sunrise. They both receive the gift of wisdom--and Pete repents of his felonious ways, while Scrooge returns the pearl to its rightful owners rather than use it for "mere profit".

This episode, Keyes' best, marks the return of the "classic" Black Pete to the "Duck universe". Pete is more "Pete-like" here than in any other episode in which he appears, with his greed fully matching Scrooge's (he wants to use the pearl to obtain sufficient criminal intellect to "(pull) crimes of the century every day!") and his comical, overbearing villainy ("Let's not forget the diabolical laughter!") a wonderful throwback to his glory days in the Mickey strip and the Carl Fallberg/Paul Murry Mickey Mouse serials of the 50's and 60's. Indeed, this episode could almost be considered a Murry tribute, with Yardarm and the Banana Islanders "dead ringers" for Murry dogfaces and the plot resembling one of those Mickey serials in which Pete is skulking around the South Seas up to no good. The only possible debit is the rather "soppy" ending, with the themes of redemption, repentance and "true wisdom" laid on somewhat thick. When two incorrigibles like Pete and Scrooge are involved, though, it's difficult to call any tale overly moralistic.

The running situations and gags involving marbles and "mashers" ("thunderthumb" Huey and his invincible "Great Masher" which detonates the bad guys' torpedo, the nephews' marbles underfoot which trip Yardarm) are educational as well as funny--hooked on Nintendo and computer software, most modern kids have never touched an "immie", let alone seen a "masher". The "Great Masher" is used in a quintessentially Barksian way, with the toy instrumental in saving the ducks' lives.

(22) "The Curse of Castle McDuck" Joe=*** Chris=***½
AD: 10/19/87 ("Black Monday") D: Steve Clark W: Anthony Adams
Additional Voices: shepherd=Pat McCormick, Druid chieftain=Brock Peters

In Scotland, Scrooge, HD&L and Webby face the mysterious curse put on the ancient McDuck manse, Castle McDuck--a fierce, glowing hound that guards the castle at night. Scrooge learns that the hound is controlled by Druids, who use the castle for their night meetings. Intent on recovering his family's property, he traps the hound and several Druids with the kids' help--and learns that the McDucks were the real trespassers (his great-great-grandfather Silas had appropriated the Druids' stone meeting circle to save on building costs). The castle becomes a "haunted castle tourist attraction" (staffed by Druids, run by Scrooge) in the daytime and remains a Druid meeting place at night.

In its component parts (Gothic castle, menacing hound), this tale certainly reminds one of Barks' "Hound of the Whiskervilles" (US 29, 1960), but in tone, the two stories could not be more different. Adams "plays it" completely straight, building plot momentum slowly and focusing on Scrooge's ancestral fears of the hound

(and his struggle to conquer them) and the need to maintain and respect cultural heritage; there are probably fewer gags here than in any other DT episode. Barks' eight-page tale was a mixture of McDuck history, fast-paced action, and a satirical trashing of modern art. It's rather pointless to compare the two stories because of their different focuses, but Adams' tale is very well told.

Here, DT presents its first--but not its last--explanation of how Scrooge came to America. He describes his parents as "poor, simple famers" who "just wanted to start over somewhere else" and says that he emigrated to America with them as "a lad of six". (The McDucks must have emigrated in a hurry--Scrooge left behind his "first piggy bank" with money still inside.) The later "Once Upon a Dime" completely contradicts this story. In view of the quality of the latter episode, we prefer this version.

(23) "Launchpad's Civil War" Joe=***½ Chris=***½
AD: 10/20/87 D: Steve Clark W: Pamela Hickey, Dennys McCoy
Additional Voices: Mayor Rufus B. Pinfeather=Richard Erdman, Colonel Beauregard DuBark=Frank Welker

Launchpad is invited to the town of Duck Ridge to reenact the role of his "heroic" great-great-grandfather, Union General Rhubarb McQuack, in a mock battle commemorating the Battle of Duck Ridge. To his chagrin, he learns that Rhubarb bungled the battle so badly that his embarrassed troops slunk away, never to be seen again. When Launchpad (mounted on Grace, the clumsy descendant of Rhubarb's horse) crashes into a cave on Duck Ridge, he discovers Rhubarb's aged troops, who've been hiding there since the war. Launchpad, HD&L, Doofus and the oldtimers plot to erase the long-ago disgrace by winning the mock battle. "General" Launchpad mangles the "battle plan" as badly as his ancestor did but still manages to lead "McQuack's Marauders" to victory.

We all know the stories of Japanese troops who hid in the jungles of the South Pacific and "held out" until long after World War II was over. This hysterically funny episode extends the "holding out" idea to its most ludicrous extreme. Obviously, Civil War veterans would not be alive today, let alone mobile, but the suspension of disbelief is easy because obsession is used as the life-prolonging force, just as it was with "El Capitan" in "Golden Suns". The tale is played in the key of F-Troop, with Launchpad fitting the Captain Parmenter role perfectly. (Just as an "accidental" charge gave Parmenter command of Fort Courage, so a McQuack pratfall starts the decisive charge here.) A funny flashback to the day of the battle proves that the McQuack incompetence gene, though perhaps recessive (witness "The Flying McQuacks"), has been present for a long time.

A soft-pedaled Civil War history lesson is included along with the slapstick. It lacks a Barksian amount of historical detail, except for a few facts pertaining to 1860s military technology (the use of balloons for aerial reconnaissance, the oldsters' iron-clad "Merriquack"), but is right on target in its portrayal of the emotions aroused by the conflict and the various ways in which modern America commemorates the war. The theme of reconciliation between the old Union soldiers and the people of Duck Ridge--who display a large Confederate flag during the celebration--is a potentially touchy one but is very well-handled.

(24) "Sweet Duck of Youth" Joe=** Chris=**
(Semi-adaptation of "That's No Fable" (US 32, 1960))
AD: 10/21/87 D: Steve Clark W: Ken Koonce, David Wiemers
1st App: Gladstone Gander (cameo)
Additional Voices: old swamp dweller=Brian Cummings

Scrooge, worried over signs of aging, goes with HD&L and Launchpad in search of the Fountain of Youth in the Okefedokee Swamp. The ducks become separated, and Scrooge and Launchpad are captured by an old swamp dweller who's been looking for the Fountain for 30 years and using the armor of Ponce de Loon to scare away intruders. HD&L come to the rescue, and Dewey finds the map to the fountain inside

Ponce's helmet by solving an ancient riddle. The Fountain turns out to only make one's reflection young, but Scrooge returns home with a renewed philosophy--"you're only as old as you feel".

It would be hard not to describe this as the weakest Duck treatment of the "eternal youth" theme. Barks' adventure tale and pithy satire of commercialism is replaced with a rather dull and unremarkable "justification" of a bromide that is hardly sensational new dogma. The episode also pales in comparison with Barks' 1981 picture story, "Go Slowly Sands of Time". In contrast to Scrooge's somewhat panicky dash after a chimera Fountain here, "Go Slowly" gives him a McDuck-like motivating factor (wanting to preserve his fortune from those who would squander it) and develops the search with much more care (the ducks research the Vale of Hunza and try many different life-extending "remedies" once they're there).

In case you blinked, you missed Gladstone's first animated appearance. He's in the crowd of well-wishers at Scrooge's birthday party.

(25) "Earth Quack" Joe=**½ Chris=***
(Adaptation of "Land Beneath the Ground" (US 13, 1956))
AD: 10/22/87 D: Alan Zaslove S: Carl Barks TP: Mark Young
Additional Voices: little Terri-Fermian=Joan Gerber, Terri-Fermian king=Frank Welker, Terri Fermian Coach=Chuck Mc Cann

Fearing that an earthquake may destroy his money, Scrooge hires Gyro to build a gigantic shock absorber to cushion a possible blow, but the workmen flee when they hear voices four miles beneath the Earth. Scrooge investigates in a mine car, but when the winch breaks, he's off on a wild ride into Terry Fermy, followed by HD&L. The Terri-Fermians first ignore and then jail Scrooge for interfering with the Great Games (rolling and crashing against a giant pillar), but HD&L rescue him, and the ducks escape with the Terri-Fermians' "Crackpot Trophy", leaving behind Scrooge's top hat--which the TF king proclaims the new trophy. The TF's create a giant quake which cracks and drains the money bin, but they immediately send the money back--it's "litter" and interferes with the Games.

If you don't mind a streamlined version of one of Barks' genuine classics, this adaptation should satisfy you (even with that dreadful title); if you do mind, watching this may put you in a mood to roll and crash against something. Terry Fermy is still recognizable as Barks', and the Terri-Fermians look the same, though they've lost their Western accents (probably because it would take too long to explain their origin) and have apparently forgotten the art of lifting plates of rock since 1956. Their attitude toward the ducks is much different. Though they seem more preoccupied than actively hostile, they're far less likable characters. A new subtheme involving a little Terri-Fermian who wants to prove itself by rolling in the Games has some precedent in Barks (the "earthquake school" gag) but seems a bit obtrusive nonetheless. In contrast to the original, there's very little dialogue; admittedly, it would be impossible to cram all the verbal nuances of Barks' story into 22 minutes, and the action sequences are all very well done, but much of the color provided by the original's duck/TF byplay is gone. This one you'll either like or hate--there's no middle ground.

In his essay "The Triumph of Scrooge McDuck" in Uncle Scrooge in Color (1987), Geoffrey Blum praises the animation of the ride into Terry Fermy, a ride Barks only hinted at. It is indeed a fine sequence; the only problem with it is the amount of time it consumes. By the time HD&L's mine car finishes rolling, the episode is half over, leaving precious little time to develop the Terri-Fermians as characters. It's up to the viewer to decide if the sequence's visual beauty is worth it.

(26) "Home Sweet Homer" Joe=**** Chris=****
AD: 10/23/87 D: Alan Zaslove W: Anthony Adams
Additional Voices: Homer=Michael Mish, Circe=Tress MacNeille, King Blowhard=Peter Cullen, Ariel=Tress MacNeille, Sirens=Frank Welker

In a photo Donald sends HD&L, Scrooge recognizes remains of the Colossus of Duckapopolis, built by Ulysses, and the sea passage to the lost city of Ithaquack. Investigating in Scrooge's yacht, the ducks are picked up and deposited in 1100 BC Greece by an errant "time twister" brewed up by the evil sorceress Circe, ruler of Ithaquack, to get rid of Ulysses' nephew Homer. With the help of windy King Blowhard, the ducks and Homer reach Ithaquack, dodging many Odyssean perils along the way. Circe turns Homer's queen Ariel, Scrooge and Homer into pigs, but HD&L smash Circe's "magic medallion" and she becomes a pig herself. The "time twister" abruptly reappears and brings Scrooge and HD&L back to the present...to be picked up by Donald's carrier.

One of the season's most uniformly excellent episodes, this tale combines adventure, suspense and humor in near-Barksian proportions. It's tempting to suggest that "Oddball Odyssey" (US 40, 1963) may have served as an inspiration for the plot, but this episode delves far deeper into the world of The Odyssey than Barks did, and Circe, far from being a Magica De Spell clone, is a pure original, a cross between Magica and a malevolent Miss Piggy (MacNeille's superb voicing really brings her to life). As Chuck Jones did in his famous Bugs/Elmer adaptation of the Wagner Ring cycle, "What's Opera, Doc?" (1957), Adams manages to capture the essence of Homer's epic in a few minutes, with our heroes meeting parodies of King Aeolos (Blowhard), the Sirens (who almost lure Scrooge to his doom by commanding him to "look into our eyes of gold" in an unsettling but memorable scene), the cave-dwelling Haryvdi (the "Yuccalinda" monster), and lotus flowers (the "uma-guma" fruit whose pollen causes Blowhard's sneezing). The casting of Homer as a youth is a bit odd (perhaps these adventures are where he got the inspiration for his poem?), and the sudden reappearance of the "time twister" seems a rather "ex machina" way of getting the ducks back to the present, but these are only minor quibbles with a beautifully-constructed tale.

An interesting subplot concerns the efforts of youth to emulate age. HD&L take turns claiming that they'll grow up to be just like Scrooge (who's at his most confident and aggressive here), Homer admits the weight of his illustrious uncle (Blowhard: "He was a mountain of a man!" Homer: "I'm more of a hill") but is challenged by Scrooge to chart his own course, and Donald, in a "walk-on" at the end, hopes HD&L will emulate him. Far from bogging things down, the theme is subtle and unobtrusive. Anyone who thinks getting a "moral" across in a cartoon requires ten-foot-high letters should take a look at this episode!

(27) "Bermuda Triangle Tangle" Joe=**** Chris=****
AD: 10/26/87 D: Steve Clark W: Frank Ridgeway
Additional Voices: Captain Foghorn=Frank Welker, Captain Bounty Allan Melvin, Captain Slattery=Peter Renaday

When Scrooge loses his third ship in two years in the Bermuda Triangle, he and HD&L sail there on Scrooge's flagship ("skippered" by the goofy fill-in Captain Foghorn), only to run aground on a giant, fogbound mass of seaweed where many other ships are hopelessly stuck. The ducks meet a motley group of survivors led by the domineering Captain Bounty, who assigns various duties, cracks corny jokes and scoffs at any mention of escape. Refusing to give up hope, Scrooge manages to win the survivors and even a reluctant Captain Bounty to his side, and the ducks eventually free Scrooge's flagship and sail back to Duckburg. Realizing that his gifts lie in helping others survive, Bounty returns to the Triangle.

A direct descendant of Barks' "lost-race" and "mysterious-legend" tales, this episode has something for everyone. The episode mirrors Barks' tales of the Golden River and the Flying Dutchman in its nonsupernatural, yet "romantic", explanation of the fate of ships lost in the Triangle, and the seaweed society's isolation and "formalized" code of behavior place it squarely in the tradition of Plain Awful, Tralla La and the Peeweegah Indian country (though the "natives", in contrast to those in Barks' domains, lead anything but an idyllic lifestyle). Add a memorable antagonist in Captain Bounty and ample comic relief in the form of Captain Foghorn and the "seaweed monster" (an underwater Triangle predator who tracks Scrooge wherever he goes), and you have the makings of a classic.

Captain Bounty is a wonderfully conceived character, DT's best antagonist since "El Capitan". The unbending will which has enabled his people to survive is also his greatest weakness--it takes someone with a will as strong as Scrooge's to win Bounty over, and even then, the tension between the two never quite goes away (they trade good-natured barbs up to the end). The bullying elements in Bounty's personality are neatly balanced by his compassion--he saves Scrooge from the "seaweed monster" several times, once even while professing not to like Scrooge much. Melvin's great voice characterization adds the final touch to a character worthy of Barks at his best.

(28) "Micro Ducks from Outer Space" Joe=**½ Chris=**½
(Adaptation of US 65, 1966)
AD: 10/27/87 D: Alan Zaslove S: Carl Barks TP: Jack Hanrahan, Eleanor Burian-Mohr

Gyro accidently contacts the Microducks, who are in desperate need of grain for their planet. Scrooge, faced with a surplus of wheat on his farms, is more than willing to talk business with the aliens. The Microducks use their "molecular manipulator" to enlarge Scrooge's payment (gems) and shrink the grain, but they leave the machine behind when they depart. Scrooge's attempt to enlarge his "first gold nugget" results in him, HD&L and Webby being shrunk to micro-size. The ducks make a harrowing trip across a giant-sized Duckburg to Gyro's lab to seek his help, but they find the machine gone when they return to the mansion. All is saved when a glue-covered Launchpad emerges from an earlier pratfall--with the Micros' space ship stuck to his forehead.

This could almost have been retitled "Compressed Ducks", with the headlined Microducks being given little to do and the vast majority of time being devoted to the shrunken ducks' attempts to reach Gyro's lab--and the adaptation suffers greatly for it. Not that the trip across Duckburg is poorly done--in fact, it's quite imaginative, the highlights being the ducks' matchbox cruise in a gutter, a hectic hitchhike on a skateboard, and the rescue of Webby from a spider's web, a good re-creation of the classic scene from the end of 1958's The Fly. (The tangled Webby delivers one of the series' best lines, a plaintive "This adventure is just going to ruin my dress!".) It's easy to imagine Disney's Honey, I Shrunk the Kids (1989) taking inspiration from the ducks' trip, which also conjures up memories of Fantastic Voyage (1966) and "The Crash" (1968), the pilot to Irwin Allen's Land of the Giants. Where this adaptation fails is in the characterization (or lack thereof) of the Microducks. So likable in the original, the Microducks here are nothing more than a gimmick to get Scrooge and company down to micro-size. Even when they are present, they speak in robotic tones and "play it" absolutely deadpan in the hoariest "take me to your leader" tradition--they even say, "Farewell, Earthlings!" as they leave with the grain. As good as it is, the trip sequence can't begin to make up for the loss of the satire and romance caused by this reduction (pun intended) of the Microducks' role. Paging Princess Teentsy Teen.

(29) "Back to the Klondike" Joe=*** Chris=***
(Adaptation of FC 456, 1953)
AD: 10/28/87 D: Steve Clark S: Carl Barks TP: Tedd Anasti, Patsy Cameron
1st App: Glittering Goldie
Additional Voices: Dangerous Dan=Will Ryan, Glittering Goldie=Joan Gerber

Scrooge reminisces to his family about his Klondike mining days, telling the tale of how he met Glittering Goldie in Dangerous Dan's honkytonk. Cheated by Goldie and Dan out of a giant gold nugget, Scrooge demanded satisfaction of Goldie, and the two ended up mining together at White Agony Creek, making big plans for the future. Scrooge's stash disappeared, though, and Dan told Scrooge that Goldie stole it. Scrooge takes HD&L back to his old claim, which they find is occupied and guarded by the fierce bear Blackjack. The "claim jumper" is Goldie, who, after a "romantic" reunion with Scrooge, starts arguing with him over the lost stash. A bullet from Goldie's pistol reveals a vein of gold, but the angry Goldie leaves Scrooge and HD&L to mine it for themselves. Transporting the gold by train, the ducks are held up by

Dan, who tells Scrooge that he actually took the stash. Goldie, riding Blackjack, comes to the rescue, and Scrooge gives the claim and the rest of the gold to her.

A disaster or a delight? Take your pick. There are almost as many opinions about this "revamping" of Barks' Klondike epic as there are Duck fans. Anasti and Cameron display more guts than Western did in '53, showing an abbreviated (Scrooge vs. Dan) version of the censored barroom brawl and hinting that Scrooge and Goldie did indeed "cohabit" (a question that Barks left open), but the cutesy "Valentine" business, bursting hearts and moony looks seem more suited to a Care Bears cartoon. Almost everyone seems to agree that the ending scene (Scrooge and Goldie smooching on top of Blackjack while the nearby train chuffs out pink, heart-shaped smoke plumes) is practically unwatchable--whether you can stomach the other sweetness is a matter of taste. The addition of Dangerous Dan is another source of possible debate. In the context of the episode, it could be said that he's the man responsible for Scrooge's becoming the world's richest duck--who knows how different Scrooge's life would have been had he settled down with Goldie? For those who believe that Scrooge's version of his relationship with Goldie as told in the Barks story wasn't the whole truth, it may not be so hard to believe that a Dangerous Dan could have existed. Some, however, may choose to regard Dan as a superfulous nuisance.

Excluding the story changes, the rest of the episode is glorious. The animation and Klondike scenery are both superb, and Barks' Goldie is perfectly realized in both her "young" and "old" versions, with Gerber providing an effective Mae West-type voice. Some gags from the original are more or less copied (the honey/cage attempt to capture Blackjack, Scrooge being catapulted from a tree), with good results. The packaging can't really be called into question here--but what's inside can.

(30) "Horse Scents" Joe=**½ Chris=**½
AD: 10/29/87 D: Alan Zaslove W: Earl Kress
Additional Voices: Mr. Merriweather=Hal Smith,
Bull Weevil=Johnny Haymer

Scrooge and Glomgold have both entered horses in the Kenducky Derby, and HD&L and Webby convince Scrooge to let them enter M'Lady, a hammy photo horse whose owner, Mr. Merriweather, is at the end of his financial rope. While Glomgold tries to steal Scrooge's horse, the kids learn that M'Lady runs like the wind when she hears the angry voice of Merriweather's creditor Bull Weevil--or when she hears the tooting of a bugle. On race day, Webby plays jockey, and M'Lady streaks into the lead, but HD&L suddenly realize that if M'Lady wins, Weevil gets the prize money. When M'Lady stops to pose for the photo-finish camera, Scrooge and Glomgold's horses finish in a tie. Scrooge hires the now-famous M'Lady to pose with hordes of kids.

The plot here should be quite familiar to the fans of the old Hanna-Barbera series Top Cat; it's taken directly from a 1961 episode, "The $1,000,000 Derby", in which "TC" and his gang, posing as foreign dignitaries, enter a tired old photo horse, Arabelle, who runs wild at the sound of bells, whistles or sirens, in the Derby, losing out in the same "photo-finish" ending. The progression of both races is almost exactly the same, and Hal Smith even voiced the race announcer in both cases. Kress dresses up the plot by using the Scrooge/Glomgold rivalry as a backdrop, introducing Weevil as a menace and casting Webby as Roddy McDowall to M'Lady's Flicka (a role she's eminently qualified to fill and one she carries off with spunk), but the parallels to "Derby" simply scream "swipe". Questions of plagiarism aside, it would be hard to describe this episode as anything other than thoroughly mediocre.

(31) "Scrooge's Pet" Joe=**** Chris=***½
(Adaptation of "The Lemming with the Locket" (US 9, 1955))
AD: 10/30/87 D: Steve Clark W: Jack Enyart
Additional Voices: Barnacle Biff=Brian Cummings

Webby and HD&L buy Lucky the Lemming from sailor Barnacle Biff of the "Moony Gull", hoping to help Scrooge stop worrying so much about his money, but the critter knocks over a statue of Goldie on which Scrooge has hung a locket containing the combination to his new vault and takes off with the locket around its neck. The ducks and Launchpad track it to "Novay", where they find the people fleeing--"The lemmings are coming!" And come they do, despite every attempt of the ducks to stop them. Scrooge's fortune is saved only when Lucky is found stuck in a cheese the kids had gotten and hung on a telephone wire.

This is the Miller Genuine Draft of the DT Barks adaptations--"it's as real as it gets". The match between it and the original is near-perfect, though there are some differences--a change in how the ducks get the lemming, a slight increase in the lemming's anthropomorphic qualities, and the change of the lemming exodus to the fictitious "Novay", which is apparently done for the sake of a single, admittedly imaginative, gag (Webby asks some fleeing Novaygians if they'll help search for Lucky, and they freeze and shout "No-VAY!!!"). The lemming stampede is done well in "close-up" (packs of lemmings being animated as moving brown clumps), and it's a treat to see it "live" at last, no longer static on the pages of a comic book. Though there's little dialogue compared to the original, Barks' pacing and suspenseful plot are translated very accurately.

What really lifts this out of the ordinary are two things: the extensive use of the original's gags and the substitution of Launchpad for Donald. Haystack collapse, crow's nest chase, harpoon firing, cheese-hanging...all the familiar gags are here, and the new ones are also funny (especially Launchpad's attempt to stop the lemmings with a fire hose; he shouts "Surf's up!" as the water/lemming wave engulfs him). Launchpad is a far more effective "second banana" than Donald was in the original, with some good gag/insult byplay between him and Scrooge livening things up considerably and adding a Barksian counterpoint of humor to the tension of the plot... more evidence of Launchpad's viability as a major character. The only really bad thing here is the inexcusable lack of story credit for Barks, but even that clerical "faux pas" doesn't much dim the luster of this episode.

(32)-(35) "The Firefly Fruit Contest" (4-part serial) Joe=***½ Chris=***
AD: 11/2/87-11/5/87
D: Alan Zaslove (parts 1,2,3), Terence Harrison (4)
SEd: Jymn Magon
S: Jymn Magon, Bruce Talkington, Mark Zaslove
TP: Len Uhley (1), Anthony Adams (2), Michael Keyes (3), Bruce Reid Schaefer (4)
Additional Voices: Grand Kishki=Hamilton Camp, Dr. Horatio Bluebottle=Chuck McCann

The second of the multipart sagas, this tale concerns the "ultimate" money-matching duel between Scrooge and Glomgold. The four parts:

(1) "A Drain on the Economy"--The Grand Kishki of Macaroon wants the world's richest man to market newly-discovered "firefly fruit", which may make light bulbs obsolete. Scrooge and Glomgold must bring their money to Macaroon to be weighed within 10 days. Glomgold hires the Beagle Boys to attack Scrooge's money bin, but though the Beagles recruit all their cousins to help in the assault, Scrooge's Beagle-traps foil them. When the paranoid Scrooge booby-traps his vault door with a giant cannon and accidentally activates the trap, the cannon blows a giant hole in the bin floor, and Scrooge's money falls into the Duckburg water system. Scrooge and HD&L manage--just barely--to recover it from the Beagles after a hectic chase through the Duckburg sewers.

(2) "A Whale of a Bad Time"--Scrooge tries to secretly ship his money to Macaroon on two freighters, but a mysterious "sea monster" sinks the first ship, and Scrooge and HD&L find it empty of cash and cordoned off by the Navy. With Scrooge and Donald aboard, Scrooge's second ship is sunk by the "monster", a giant killer whale--in reality, a giant submarine built for the Navy and then stolen by Dr. Horatio Bluebottle, whom Glomgold's hired to hold Scrooge's money until the contest is over.

The Navy attacks, and Bluebottle's sub, crippled by depth charges, sinks into the Marinara Trench--but Scrooge dumps his money into the Trench and the craft surfaces.

(3) "Aqua Ducks"--Scrooge, Launchpad, Gyro and Doofus dive in Gyro's "Golddigger" to salvage Scrooge's money with heavy balloons, but they reach the bottom of the Trench to find it gone. Captured by a race of "Fishfolk" and convicted of littering, the four are put to work in the "Fishfolk"'s junkyard--in reality, the sunken city of Atlantis. Scrooge tries to escape, but the giant sea creature Glubzilla stops him, and he's jailed in a sunken ship. Scrooge's companions use a combination of Gyro's "super-fizz" (which dissolves the coral holding Atlantis to the sea bed), Doofus' ability to "talk" with dolphins, and Launchpad's dolphin-riding skills to raise Atlantis to the surface--just in time to save Scrooge from drowning.

(4) "Working for Scales"--In Macaroon, Glomgold puts the freed Bigtime, Bouncer and Burger to work watching for Scrooge while he waits for Scrooge's 10 days to run out. Scrooge, HD&L, Gyro and Launchpad fly into Macaroon on balloon-suspended Atlantis but face a battle with the Beagles after HD&L neglect the cloud-cover machine while looking for the lost treasure of Atlantis. When Gyro and Scrooge fall off the flying island, HD&L must steer it to the scales. The contest seems to end in a tie, but Glomgold has a steam-shovelful of money "in reserve" to Scrooge's Old #1 Dime. Just in time, HD&L trick the Beagles into helping them find the lost treasure, and Scrooge wins the contest--while "Glomgold's just a poor second."

It would be nice to say that the trio of Magon, Talkington and Zaslove duplicate their "Golden Suns" success with this tale. Unfortunately, they don't. Though there's a lot to like here, the serial suffers a bit from a relative paucity of really original ideas (the money-piling contest, the destruction of the money bin floor, and the sunken-city scenario all having been used by Barks) and an inconsistency in the quality of the individual episodes. "A Whale of a Bad Time" and "Working for Scales" are excellent by any standards, but "A Drain on the Economy" fails to take full advantage of some promising scenarios and is a bit careless with details (why is Scrooge's money loose cash above street level but stored in moneybags in the sewers?), while "Aqua Ducks" is a pale carbon copy of "Cold Duck" and features a sarcastic, abrasive and positively unlikable Scrooge to boot. Ultimately, one remembers parts of the serial with far greater clarity the one does the whole; It's the undeniable strength of the best of these segments (the sea battle in "Whale", the race against time in "Scales") that gives the serial the high rating it gets.

Characterization and character use are at least as memorable as plot here. The Grand Kishki fits the "oh-very-much-yes" Indian stereotype to a T (his fascination with Glomgold's beeper-holding "talking coat" in "Scales" is hilarious), and the crack-brained shrimp Bluebottle steals "Whale" with his self-comparisons to Einstein and Fermi and his thrill at making the cover of Popular Mechanics. The Beagle cousins who participate in the attack on the money bin in "Economy" are the closest DT has come to the Barks Beagles: Beanball, Buck 'N Roll, Blitzkreig, Bifocal, Bulkhead, Butterball, Bullseye and the rest are large, grinning clones of each other. Their attack on the bin is a bit disappointing, though, with only a few halfway-decent gags (Bullseye literally becomes the "bullseye" of a huge cannonball, and Burger's assault on the vault is rudely cut short by some booby-trapped food). Donald's performance in "Whale" is one of his best in the series. Easily the most memorable performance here is that of Scrooge, who exudes nervousness and short temper throughout, "losing it" several times (his giggling paranoia in "Economy" and his unforgettable tantrum when he learns his ship's been sunk in "Whale"), mercilessly abusing his "moron" companions in "Aqua Ducks" and ripping into HD&L in "Scales" for betraying his trust in them. It's a measure of DT's understanding of Scrooge that such an unheroic performance doesn't seem totally out of character. One might even say that trying to outwit Glomgold for 10 days almost makes Scrooge entitled to a few outbursts.

An unusual example of a "gag hijacking" occurs in "Economy". When Scrooge trips the booby trap, the cannon shell rockets through the wall of the money bin and "rebounds" back to the bin courtesy of a stack of mattresses in a factory--a direct copy of the climatic gag of WDC&S 134 (1951), the first appearance of the Beagle Boys.

(36) "Merit-Time Adventure" Joe=*** Chris=***
AD: 11/6/87 D: Alan Zaslove W: Sharman DiVono
Additional Voices: Quackerbill=Jack Angel, Captain Mallard=Frank Welker, Captain Tann=Brian Cummings

After a sea serpent sinks Scrooge's cargo ship, the "Lucky Duck", and swallows sailor Archibald Quackerbill, Scrooge, Launchpad, HD&L, Doofus and Webby go to Duckansack Island to investigate. While Scrooge joins the Coast Guard inquiry, the kids practice for their Junior Woodchuck merit-badge sailing test. Scrooge sees some of his cargo on a truck belonging to salvager Dogface (Black) Pete, but when he enters Pete's warehouse in disguise, he's captured by the serpent. He discovers that the serpent is controlled by Quackerbill, who plans to attack the other ducks' sailboat. The ducks, with the help of Pete and other seamen, finally corral the monster--which is actually a disguised construction crane and submarine Quackerbill intended to use to eliminate salvage competition. In a Woodchuck ceremony, Webby is presented with merit badges for sailing and lifesaving (saving Launchpad's life when he fell out of the boat).

This workmanlike rephrasing of the "phony sea serpent" idea is similar to Barks' "Terror of the River" (FC 108, 1946) but is highly unusual in two major ways. For one of the few times in his career, Black Pete is <u>not</u> used as a villain--he still bullies and threatens Scrooge a bit, but when the serpent threatens the ducks' sailboat, he and the other seamen defy a Coast Guard order to stay in port and ride out to help capture it. Second, Webby is not only cast as a neophyte Woodchuck (wearing a pink uniform to the boys' blue ones), but she ends up teaching the normally infallible "ten-star generals", HD&L (and Doofus, who, in contradiction of "Superdoo", is depicted as just as competent a merit-badge winner as the nephews), a little something about the true Woodchuck spirit. Her single merit badge, and her dogged attempts to prove herself by winning more, are contrasted with the boys' casual badge-winning expertise and resulting complacency about the sailing test. When the despondent HD&L think that Scrooge is "done fer", Webby convinces them not to give up hope--for it says "never to" right in the Junior Woodchuck Guidebook. The feminist message is rather unsubtle, but this is certainly one of Webby's finest hours.

(37)-(41) Repeat of 5-part "Golden Suns" serial (see (1))

(42) "The Golden Fleecing" Joe=**½ Chris=**½
(Adaptation of US 12, 1955)
AD: 11/16/87 D: Terence Harrison
S: Carl Barks TP: Ken Koonce, David Wiemers
Additional Voices: Ludwig von Drake=Corey Burton, Agnes=Tress MacNeille, Anastasia=Joan Gerber

When Launchpad reports seeing birdlike creatures with women's heads while flying over the Black Sea, psychologist von Drake counsels "tm", but Scrooge, remembering the description of the Harpies who guarded the Golden Fleece, takes Launchpad and HD&L in quest of the Fleece, something he's wanted since he was "knee-high to (his) father's kilt". Launchpad is captured by the Harpies and thinks he's to be the main course at a banquet, but the Harpies only want him to be the "big deipno"--apparently a "royal dinner guest". Scrooge and HD&L find the fleece in the Hall of Echoes but are soon under attack from the Sleepless Dragon. Launchpad finally learns that the Harpies have fattened him up to be dinner (Greek "deipno") for the Dragon. As Anastasia, a fat Harpy who's fallen for Launchpad, tries to save him, Scrooge makes a dash for it with the Fleece, but, realizing his greed at last, he puts the Fleece over the Dragon's eyes--promptly putting it to sleep.

One could legitimately claim that, in a sense, this adaptation of US 12 is <u>more</u> faithful to Barks' original intentions, because the Harpies are <u>called</u> Harpies instead of "Larkies"--but this concession is rather meager compared to the many changes made. The light tone of the original is preserved, and many of the original's ideas and situations are present in altered form (the Hall of Echoes, the ducks

putting the Dragon to sleep, a Harpy queen named Agnes, the Dragon swallowing a major character--Anastasia here), but Koonce and Wiemers excise Barks' long opening sequence in Duckburg in favor of a "punchier" opening, "Me-Generationize" the plot by adding "tm" as a motivating factor and gag source, and turn Scrooge's interest in a golden coat into something of an obsession. Only the first of these can really be said to work well; the new opening is a clever parody of the Twilight Zone episode "Nightmare at 20,000 Feet", with Launchpad cast in an ideal role as the terrified "fall guy" watching "mythical" creatures rip at his plane. The running gag of Launchpad chanting "OM" whenever he sees a Harpy gets tiresome fast, and the theme of Scrooge learning to care for people instead of possessions is heavy-handed in the extreme and seems as out of place in this Barks tale as it did in K&W's earlier adaptation of FC 495. All in all, a very mixed bag.

Here we see the first example of Harrison's loose, "squash and stretch" directing style, a direct contrast to the more restrained and "classical" approaches of Zaslove, Clark and Block. This style (modified a bit by second and third-season directors James T. Walker and Jamie Mitchell) has since come to be the more-or-less official DT "house style".

(43) "Ducks of the West" Joe=CRASH Chris=*½
AD: 11/17/87 D: David Block W: Richard Merwin
Voices: Tex Dogie=Alan Oppenheimer, Wildcat=Chuck McCann, J.R. Mooing Frank Welker

Scrooge's oil wells are coming up dry, and he takes HD&L with him to Texas to investigate. Scrooge suspects smiling oilman J.R. Mooing of the theft. To buy some of J.R.'s land, he poses as a "nouveau riche" oilman, only to be goaded by J.R. into a cowboy contest with his entire fortune at stake. In a ghost town near the ducks' dude ranch, HD&L encounter the ghosts of desperado Jesse Jones and his white buffalo--and find that both ghosts are in fact phony. Having lost his fortune to the crooked J.R., Scrooge helps HD&L investigate the ghost town and discover an underground pumping plant being used to pump oil out of Scrooge's fields. Captured, the "ghost" proves to be Tex Dogie, owner of the dude ranch. Impressed by Scrooge's show of Western knowhow, J.R. gives Scrooge back his fortune.

"Lone Star Loser"? "Dud in the Desert"? These would have been fitting alternative titles for this botched Dallas spoof. The plot could have been lifted whole cloth from a third-rate Scooby Doo episode, and believe it or not, it's not the worst thing about the episode. The really mortal sin here should be more than obvious--there's absolutely NO WAY that Scrooge would ever bet his fortune on a contest the details of which he didn't even know beforehand. Launchpad or Donald might do it, perhaps, but Scrooge?-- never! Scrooge's reaction to the loss of his fortune isn't too believable, either...he shows hardly any emotion at all and is seemingly more interested in finding the missing oil, which would no longer be his even if he found it. Obviously, the desire to do a Dallas parody was so great that the characters were altered to fit the situation...the opposite of Barks' best stories, in which the characters draw the story possibilities out of the particular setting they're in.

If nothing else, you should endure watching this for some priceless voicework. Alan Young's bizarre, "Scottish-Western" accent used by the disguised Scrooge has to be heard to be believed, and Welker's hilarious parody of Larry Hagman is accurate right down to the speech cadence. Notable, too, are Russi Taylor's Duck-voice "Texas Drawl" and McCann's "yup" and "nope" parody of Gary Cooper for Scrooge's assistant Wildcat.

(44) "Time Teasers" Joe=**** Chris=****
AD: 11/18/87 D: David Block W: Anthony Adams

Bankjob, Babyface and Bugle (Bebop) steal Gyro's watchlike "time teaser", a device which effectively "freezes time" around the user, and use it to escape with Scrooge's money on a steamer. When they break the device and "burn a hole in the fabric of time", they wind up in 1687 Duckburg Bay and are captured by Captain Blackheart (Black Pete) and his pirate crew to be "entertainment" for Blackheart's birthday party.

Scrooge, HD&L and Gyro travel to 1687 in the "time tub" but wind up being captured too. At the party, the Beagles serenade the pirates with moldy oldies, giving the others a chance to escape and hook the "time tub" to the steamer's controls. Just as the pirates attack, Gyro makes a successful connection and returns the ducks and Beagles to the present.

The cynics among us might consider this a bit of a "cheater" because the frequent "time freezings" require no background animation, but they'd be hard-pressed to find many holes in the imaginative, Barks-quality plot. Adams seems to have a knack for mixing adventure and comedy, and this episode shows his ability off well, with "time-freezing" gags (HD&L's attempts to stop a Beagle robbery and help the hapless Duckburg Mallards win a baseball game) and the priceless birthday-party scene smoothly blending with the Beagles' dramatic escape from the pirates down a high waterfall. This could be considered the third in the trilogy of "unlikely alliances" between Scrooge and his traditional adversaries ("Robot Robbers" and "Magica's Shadow War" being the others), and it's by far the best of the three, with the Beagles helping the ducks and stalling for time by "singing for their lives" (and singing very well indeed) in an absolutely hysterical "concert scene" made all the funnier by its sheer originality. (The second-season episode "Beaglemania" also features Beagle singing talent, as a Beagle rock "single" becomes the hottest thing on the air. Perhaps the Beagles are in the wrong line of work?) Black Pete is reunited with his peg leg for the first time since the early 40's, and his hammy performance as Blackheart ("Yer the swellest bunch of beach scum I ever had the privilege of bein' cap'n of!") is icing on a memorably delicious cake.

The basic plot here bears a strong resemblance to the plots of a pair of related Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea episodes. In 1967's "A Time to Die", the sinister inventor Mr. Pem (played by Henry Jones) used a device remarkably similar to Gyro's to transport the "Seaview" back to the days of the dinosaurs. The device was eventually smashed, but Pem and gadget reappeared in the last original VBS episode, "No Way Back" (1968), in which the "Seaview" was sent back to Revolutionary War times. Though the Beagles' simple desire to loot the money bin can't compare with Pem's plot to control the world by controlling time, it wouldn't be surprising if Adams drew some inspiration from the VBS tales.

(45) "Back Out in the Outback" Joe=*** Chris=***
AD: 11/19/87 D: David Block
S: James A. Markovich TP: Richard Merwin
Additional Voices: Sundowner=Rob Paulsen, Duke Duggan=Peter Cullen

Scrooge, HD&L, Launchpad and Webby fly to Australia to investigate "willywisps" --tiny, glowing "flying saucers" that shear the sheep on Scrooge's station where they stand. Scrooge assigns HD&L to watch Webby while he, Launchpad and manager Duke Duggan fly up to reconnoiter--but Webby gets lost in the outback while trying to befriend Aussie animals, and the "willywisps" wreck the ducks' plane. Another "willywisp" attack scatters Scrooge, Duke and Duke's "digger" assistant Sundowner as they look for Webby. The man behind the "willywisps" is Duke, who plans to attack Scrooge and Sundowner if they get too close to the opal mines Duke found on Scrooge's land. Webby manages to win over some animal friends, and she, her animal allies, HD&L and Launchpad stop Duke's attack just in time.

Paul Hogan, meet James Herriot. Crocodile Dundee characters and situations are mixed with Webby's adventures in the bush, and the results aren't bad at all. The plot, like that of "Ducks of the West", has definite echoes of "Scooby Doo", but the exotic setting and the presence of multiple subplots help to dilute the imitation factor. As a Dundee parody, Sundowner is quite likable (his messy room gives even HD&L pause!), with Paulsen's voicing a major plus. On a quality scale, this ranks somewhere in the middle of Barks' trio of Australian adventures.

Getting her first adventure apart from the family group, Webby performs well, using her natural cuteness to rally the forces of nature and help the ducks triumph. Particularly interesting is the contrast between the menfolk's bumbling attempts at "teamwork" and Webby's solitary effectiveness. While she tames Sundowner's dog and a

vicious warthog with a few words, HD&L act in atypically careless fashion in letting her wander away, Launchpad turns in one of his most hapless performances, and Scrooge is reduced to futile harping about "teamwork". Is there a message there somewhere?

(46) "Raiders of the Lost Harp" Joe=**** Chris=****
AD: 11/20/87 D: David Block W: Cherie Dee Wilkerson
Additional Voices: harp=Russi Taylor

Uncovering the treasures of ancient Troy with HD&L, Scrooge finds a golden harp with a pillar in the shape of a beautiful duckess who announces in song if someone nearby is lying. Magica De Spell disguises herself as the beautiful Helen of Troy and tries to charm Scrooge out of the prize, but the harp reveals her lies. A wild chase through Duckburg ends with Scrooge and his harp in Duckburg Bay. On the night that Scrooge's Trojan Museum is to open, the stone Minotaur guardian of the harp invades Duckburg, and the combined forces of the military and the police can't stop it. Realizing that he'll have to give up his prize, Scrooge foils Magica's last-ditch attempt to steal the harp and returns it to the Minotaur.

Consider this a sort of "Barks treasure hunt" in reverse, with the tale beginning with the finding of a priceless treasure and the balance of the story turning on the characters' emotional reactions to Helen's harp and the determination of the Minotaur to get it back. Despite this unorthodox approach, the episode reeks of Barksian influences. The development of the characters' relationships to the harp is powerfully drawn and believable. While Scrooge exults that he'll never again be cheated in business deals, HD&L anguish over the presence of an infallible lie detector in the mansion ("That little golden tattletale is gonna ruin everything!"), Duckworth is merely bemused, and Magica eyes the harp's powers with greed. The violent battle of emotions in Duckburg is contrasted (through back-and-forth cutting) with the progress of the Minotaur, a living symbol of the "forces of history" that belies Scrooge's claim that "mindless superstition has no place in exploration". Very few of Barks' treasure stories resulted in total victory for the ducks, and this one is firmly in that tradition. "Pop" references to pro wrestling and Bruce Springsteen mar the pure classicism of the episode, but this is certainly one of DT's most memorable tales, a great idea executed to near-perfection.

It's tempting to draw parallels between Helen's harp and the singing harp of "Mickey and the Beanstalk" (Fun & Fancy Free, 1947). Both harps look basically the same, and Scrooge finds Helen's harp in a sealed stone box while Willie the Giant keeps the singing harp in a locked box. Of course, the tones of the tales in which the harps appear are worlds apart.

(47) "The Right Duck" Joe=*½ Chris=CRASH
AD: 11/23/87 D: Terence Harrison SEd: Jymn Magon
W: Ken Koonce, David Wiemers Story Consultants: Tedd Anasti, Patsy Cameron
Additional Voices: Dr. von Geezer=Howard Morris, Ping the Pitiless=Ronnie Schell

Fired once again by Scrooge, Launchpad tries to join Duckburg's space program as an astronaut to show everyone that he's not a stupid pilot. He loses a training competition with "Ronnie" the chimp (a reference to the man who starred opposite Bonzo?) but is picked as the perfect "proven idiot" to test Dr. von Geezer's computer guidance system. When Launchpad enters the wrong rocket, he and Doofus end up blasting off and crashing on Mars, prompting Emperor Ping the Pitiless to attack Earth with a nuclear missile. Launchpad and Doofus are inside the Martian craft when it lifts off, and Launchpad, acting on the Junior Woodchuck Guidebook's advice on how to douse a Martian bomb, lands the missile in water--Scrooge's pool.

First, the good news--this "space epic" has an amusing parody of astronaut training (Launchpad crashing a flight simulator, spacesuit and G-force sled in succession), and the ending gag is good (Ping, exiled by the Martians in favor of "Ronnie" and learning that he's being rocketed to Pluto, screeches, "I HATE DOGS!") That's it. What a waste of so many talented people, whose heads must have been in space the day they wrote this. The show's overall intelligence is a positive insult, a rarity

for DT. Not only are the corny Martians and the Germanic Dr. von Geezer stereotypes to the "n"th degree, and Doofus' behavior positively unbearable (when he's not begging his "role model" to do something, he's bawling that he's going to miss supper), but even the simplest scientific aspects of space travel are ignored. It takes Launchpad and Doofus 5 minutes or so to fly to Mars, and why would a "Voyager" probe, intended for the exploration of the outer solar system, be going there anyway? This one has "time-filler" written all over it.

(48) "Scroogerello" Joe=***½ Chris=***½
AD: 11/24/87 D: Terence Harrison S: John Pirillo TP: Evelyn Gabai

Suffering from a bad cold, the crotchety Scrooge dreams that he's "Scroogerello", put upon by his wicked stepfather (Glomgold) and stepbrothers (Bigtime, Burger and Bebop). While they go to King Gyro's "Pick-a-Prince Ball" to win Princess Goldie and raid the royal treasury, Scrooge is banished to the cellar, where he meets HD&L, locked up when they came selling Junior Woodchuck cookies, and Duckworth, exiled by Glomgold for using cod liver oil to treat Flinty's cold. Scrooge's fairy godmother and "fairy godchild-in-training" (Mrs. Beakley and Webby) free Scrooge and turn him into Prince Charming, complete with golden top hat. Goldie falls for him at the ball, but Glomgold and the Beagles kidnap her and hide out in the castle of Prince Lilypad McQuack (Launchpad turned into a you-know-what). With the magical help of Webby, who turns the bad guys into "bull-frogs", our heroes rescue Goldie, but Scrooge, ashamed of his ragged appearance, runs away, leaving only his hat behind. Goldie tries it on every man in the kingdom she can find and finally finds Scrooge--but Glomgold and the Beagles reappear to kidnap them. His fever gone, Scrooge wakes up and thanks his family for their kindness during his illness.

Simply put--no tale of the "Duck universe" has ever done things in quite this way. One could hardly imagine a more radical departure from the Barksian tradition, with key elements of the Barks "mythos" like the Junior Woodchucks and the Scrooge/Beagles and Scrooge/Glomgold rivalries coming in for a ribbing. The cookies of the ultra-competent Woodchucks are hard enough to smash a stone floor, while Glomgold steps on Scrooge's head and the Beagles pelt him with shoes and garbage. Despite the satire, the uses of these elements accurately reflect their uses in more conventional stories. The "dream-casting" is just as accurate, with all characters remaining true to their basic "drives". Launchpad gets the ducks lost in the topiary maze leading to his castle and reveals that he was turned into a frog after he crashed his shopping cart into a witch at the supermarket, Gyro builds an "automatic bouquet-thrower" for Goldie, and HD&L are as macho and girl-hating as ever (Huey: "Romance... it's not a pretty sight!"). The satirical barbs and media-reference gags fly thick and fast, making this an episode that must be seen several times to be fully appreciated. Many Barks fans will undoubtedly loathe this episode (particularly because of the use of Goldie), but for what it does, it's among DT's most original and significant tales.

It should be pointed out that, as funny as it is, the episode falls a bit short of what it could have been. The "framing story" is weak, and for all the zaniness of the script, visual gags are somewhat lacking. The type of stylistic approach used in the next episode would have punched the dialogue gags up considerably.

(49) "Double-O-Duck" Joe=**** Chris=****
AD: 11/25/87 D: Terence Harrison W: Ken Koonce, David Wiemers
Additional Voices: J. Gander Hoover=Peter Cullen, Feathers Galore=Tress MacNeille, Dr. Nogood=Rene Auberjonois

Launchpad, a double for captured spy Bruno von Beak, is recruited by J. Gander Hoover of the Duckburg Intelligence Agency to impersonate Bruno and stop Dr. Nogood, head of FOWL (the Foreign Organization for World Larceny), from destroying the world's money supply. Supplied by "Dr. G" (Gyro) with multitudinous spy gadgets, Launchpad immediately passes the first test of spyhood--he gets involved with the beautiful Feathers Galore, Bruno's girlfriend and FOWL agent. After barely surviving her karate kicks and a wild car chase, he discovers Nogood's operation under a Geneva deli.

Captured and "thrown to the lions" with Feathers, he saves them both with his "elevating shoes" and uses Feathers' telephone styling brush to call in the DIA forces. Nogood is destroyed when Feathers uses her karate, and Launchpad his bowtie camera, to knock him into a tank of boiling green goop. Turning down Hoover's offer of a permanent job, Launchpad takes his tearful leave of Feathers and returns to Duckburg with Scrooge.

One can judge the popularity of this episode by two facts: (1) it was the episode that readers of Gladstone's DuckTales comic book most wanted to see made into a comic-book story; (2) last fall Disney added to its syndicated lineup Darkwing Duck, a series largely inspired by this episode with Launchpad as one of the featured players. The episode is more than worthy of these compliments. Every James Bond cliche imaginable is parodied here, all superbly: the "lab scene", the beautiful female agent who changes sides, the supervillain's secret stronghold (and cat), an indestructible bodyguard ("Odduck" here), a last-second rescue (with the DIA troops' descent on ropes eerily similar to the invasion of Blofeld's crater stronghold in You Only Live Twice (1967)), and a nasty end for the bad guy (Nogood apparently dies here--how'd they get away with that one?). Launchpad's "deli reference" to "Cappuccino Royale" is an especially inspired gag, since the movie version of Casino Royale was itself a spoof. A welcome addition to the familiar stable of Bond ideas is the use of maps to chart Launchpad's travels (and crashes). All of these parodies, though, wouldn't have been half as effective if Launchpad hadn't been up to the challenge of an essentially "solo" performance. He is, in spades, and he succeeds grandly where Mickey Mouse, Super Secret Agent did not.

The "limited" animation here is eye-popping. "Takes" are hilarious, motion is delightfully rubbery and unrealistic, and character animation shows amazing imagination. Harrison had used this approach off and on in several earlier directorial efforts, but here it seems as though he decided to let out all the stops. Especially good are the dressing-room scene with Launchpad and Feathers (impossible to watch with a straight face even if the dialogue were taken out) and the dynamic opening sequence in which DIA agents chase Bruno across Duckburg.

(50) "Luck O' the Ducks" Joe=** Chris=**
AD: Thanksgiving Day 1987 D: Terence Harrison W: Michael O'Mahony
Additional Voices: Fardarig=Frank Welker, King Brian=Billy Barty

In a box of linens shipped to Scrooge from Ireland, he, HD&L and Webby find the tricky leprechaun Fardarig, who promptly swipes some of Scrooge's money. A merry chase ends at a construction site, where Scrooge saves Fardarig from a vat of concrete. Scrooge tricks Fardarig into revealing that, since Scrooge saved his life, Fardarig owes him a wish. In Ireland with HD&L, Webby and Launchpad, Scrooge springs his wish on the wealth leprechaun King Brian, Fardarig's "best friends"--he wants the Golden Caverns, which contain all the leprechauns' wealth. Fardarig brings Scrooge to the Caverns but plans to seal him inside with a boulder. Only Webby's kindness to Fardarig makes him change his mind and spare Scrooge's life.

Begorrah, what a bore. A rather unremarkable, by-the-numbers Tale of the Little People, this episode is notable only for the atypical casting of Scrooge as the greedy villain (his eyes bug in $'s numerous times) and a memorable performance by Welker as the shyster Fardarig. A few feeble attempts at irreverence are made (Launchpad's silly green suit and the giant, rolling potato that threatens to "mash" Scrooge and Fardarig in the Golden Caverns), but in general, the Irish settings and the leprechauns are so stereotyped that the only things missing to make the cliches complete are a rainbow, a pot of gold to put under it, and the "Notre Dame Victory March". Considering that Barks never set a story in the Emerald Isle, the lackluster use of the veritable treasure trove of Irish legends and characters has to be considered a major opportunity missed.

(51) "Duckworth's Revolt" Joe=***½ Chris=**½
AD: 11/27/87 D: Terence Harrison W: Dale Hale
Additional Voices: Lt. Garlic=Michael Bell, Sgt. Squash=Steve Susskind, Brigadier Broccoli=George DiCenzo

HD&L think that Duckworth should stop letting Scrooge treat him like a "slave". Overhearing this, Scrooge abruptly fires Duckworth and sends him out into the world so he'll have a chance to make "big bucks". Waiting for the bus, Duckworth and HD&L are captured by a band of alien vegetables who put them to work with other captive beings in a giant garden inside their cornucopia-shaped spaceship. When Duckworth tells HD&L not to make trouble, the boys are convinced that he likes being a slave--but not after he reveals his plans for a revolt to them. Duckworth's appeals to rebel are finally heard by the other creatures, who take over the ship--just as it goes out of control. With the help of Brigadier Broccoli, Duckworth manages to land the ship on a fertile green planet. The grateful alien veggies send Duckworth, HD&L and the other slaves back to their planets.

If "Where No Duck Has Gone Before", "Scroogerello" and "Double-O-Duck" were Jay Ward, this is pure Salvador Dali, a slightly surreal reprise of "Where No Duck" with Duckworth replacing Launchpad as leading man. It certainly was at least partially inspired by the "Lost in Space" episode "The Great Vegetable Rebellion" (1968), in which an ambulatory giant carrot (with a human face!) imprisons the Robinsons for intruding on its plant-populated domain. Both "GVR" and this episode look ridiculous at first glance, and yet, if you can buy the premise (which many may be unable to do) and accept the shows' peculiar internal logic, they may yield considerable rewards. We differed sharply on the quality of the episode--many of you will, too.

The casting of Duckworth as the hero deserves some points for bravery. If Duckworth has a human parallel, it's probably Sir John Gielgud's valet role in Arthur (1981) or the late Alan Napier's Alfred in the Batman TV series. Like Duckworth, these "gentlemen's gentlemen" have considerable strength of character hidden behind their suave facades, character that awaits only the proper occasion to reveal itself.

Perhaps taking a cue from the episode's absurdist tone, the plot line has some rather large holes. Not even Scrooge would fire someone on the flimsy pretext given here, and HD&L abruptly give up their position of strength in the control room to "save" Duckworth "just in case he needs saving". This from such paragons of levelheadedness?--COME ON.

(52) "Magica's Magic Mirror" Joe=* Chris=**
"Take Me Out of the Ball Game" Joe=CRASH Chris=CRASH
AD: 11/30/87 (two 15-minute stories in one program)
D: Steve Clark (Magic Mirror), Vincent Davis (Ball Game)
W: Richard Merwin (Magic Mirror), Tedd Anasti (Ball Game)

(Magic Mirror) A disguised Magica gives Scrooge a magic mirror which supposedly will reveal the future. Magica intends to use it to trick Scrooge out of Old #1 by using staged future events broadcast over a second mirror. The mirror fools HD&L, Doofus, Launchpad and eventually even Scrooge, but finally HD&L reveal Magica's scheme.

(Ball Game) Duckworth subs for Launchpad as coach of the Junior Woodchucks' baseball team in their championship game against the Beagle Brats and their coach Ma Beagle. Duckworth's insistence on proper behavior (no sliding or stealing bases, etc.) leaves the Woodchucks behind entering the last inning. When Duckworth suggests that the kids treat their at-bats as golf swings, they rally and have a chance to win--but Doofus is their last hope. Duckworth tells him to pretend that the ball is a cream puff, and he hits a game-winning home run...which catches up with Scrooge and Launchpad as they land in Europe.

Call this a meal of DT leftovers. Both of these mini-tales are obviously edited versions of longer episodes; "Magic Mirror" has several sudden cuts and fadeouts and an ending that appears to have been tacked on to serve as a "bridge" into the second story, and in "Ball Game", the Woodchucks prepare to go into the field at one point and just as suddenly are at bat again. The cut-and-paste format is particularly frustrating because the "magic mirror" idea deserved better treatment than the sloppy, slapdash one it got here. There are definite echoes of "Raiders of the Lost Harp" in the idea of a magical object that can cause different people to act in different ways, but the plot here is far too rushed to accomplish anything. By contrast, "Ball Game" is kindergarten-level stuff and contains a huge insult to the audience. Doofus' homer's silly defiance of all physical laws simply has no place in a show of DT's intelligence; it might have been OK to have had the ball conk Launchpad as he and Scrooge flew over the field, but when they're thousands of miles away ...shame on you, Tedd Anasti.

(53) "Duck to the Future" Joe=***½ Chris=***½
AD: 12/1/87 D: Terence Harrison W: Ken Koonce, David Wiemers
Additional Voices: old HD&L=Avery Schreiber

Wanting to know how far HD&L's business sense will take them, Scrooge asks a fortune teller to show him the future. The teller is really Magica, who uses her "Sands of Time" to send Scrooge to future Duckburg, where Scrooge finds that "Magica-McDuck Enterprises" controls everything and that HD&L have become Magica's right-hand men...a result of Magica's long-ago theft of Old #1 after Scrooge was gotten rid of. With the help of the grown-up Webby and Doofus (now husband & wife) and an aged, creaky-boned Launchpad, Scrooge recovers his dime from Magica's fortress. The pursuing Magica reveals her long-ago deception to the shocked HD&L, who grapple with her for her plane's controls. After making a few time stops along the way (with Scrooge threatening to leave Magica behind unless she gives him back Old #1), Scrooge and Magica wind up back at HD&L's lemonade stand.

Though it's not their best, this episode is quintessential Koonce and Wiemers... a fast-paced tale filled with memorable character bits and media satire. Despite the title, it bears little resemblance to the hit movie, seeming more like a hybrid of The Wizard of Oz (featuring extended parodies of some scenes from the 1939 classic and using "magic" as the means of time travel) and It's a Wonderful Life (Scrooge learning how different things could be without him). Koonce and Wiemers' evident fascination with these two movies is reflected in other episodes they've written (in "Full Metal Duck", part 3 of the second-season "Super DuckTales" serial, they even use a clip of It's a Wonderful Life on the soundtrack), and their clever amalgamation of both into the plot has the sureness of a labor of love. They throw in some "techno-gags" of the Jetsons variety (moving sidewalks, traffic cops on rockets) for good measure.

The "futures" of various characters are amusing and generally credible. It's hard to believe that HD&L would become "robber barons" based on a few words of business advice from Scrooge, let along work for Magica, and it takes a leap of faith to imagine Webby and Doofus getting married, but the elderly Launchpad and his "crash course" on "how to survive a wreck without becoming one" and the incredibly absent-minded Gyro more than make up for it.

The Oz parodies are funny and well-executed. The future Magica has reduced her contact with others to "audiences" over which she presides as a disembodied image; the scenes in her audience chamber are by far the episode's best. Her stronghold is guarded by "metal militia" who look like the Wicked Witch's soldiers and a robot guard who sticks its head through a hole in the door to talk with the ducks.

(54) "Jungle Duck" Joe=*** Chris=***
AD: 12/2/87 D: Terence Harrison SEd: Jymn Magon
W: Evelyn Gabai, Jymn Magon, Bruce Talkington TP: Judy Zook
Additional Voices: Prince Greydrake=Frank Welker

Scrooge, HD&L, Launchpad and Mrs. Beakley journey to the Bongo Congo in search of the legendary "silver buzzard". Mrs. Beakley is captured by the feared jungle "phantom", a muscular Tarzan-like duck who turns out to be her old charge, Prince Greydrake, whose plane was presumed lost 20 years ago. "Jungle Duck" helps save the other ducks from being forced by natives to take a dive into boiling oil. The "buzzard" turns out to be the wreck of the plane in which Greydrake crashed. Refurbishing the plane and boiling the natives' oil into fuel, the ducks fly to Greydrake's homeland, foil his usurping uncle and see him crowned the rightful king.

All the parodies you'd expect--"Me Tarzan, you Jane", vine-swinging, nasty natives, and all that--are included here, but the episode shows more depth and intelligence than most Tarzan parodies, referring heavily to the core legend of Greystoke rather than simply mimicking the movie serials. A tiny bit of Mrs. Beakley's past is revealed, and her attempts to draw information out of the half-savage "Jungle Duck" (whose voice resembles Welker's Dynomutt) are a major highlight. The description of the "phantom" as "the ghost who swings by night" is a clear reference to the newspaper-strip Phantom, and the mysterious "buzzard" that turns out to be a relic of outside civilization could be considered a parody of the Coke bottle in The Gods Must Be Crazy (1980). Scrooge's line at the end seems an accurate sumup of the episode: "not a silver mine, mind you, but not bad".

Notable here is the crowd scene at Greydrake's coronation, a reflection of Harrison's apparent weakness for dotting crowds with minor DT characters (displayed most grandly in "Till Nephews Do Us Part"). Present at the ceremony are Lord Battmounten and none other than Gladstone. Guess an invitation and a plane ticket just blew the lucky gander's way.

(55) "Launchpad's First Crash" Joe=** Chris=**
AD: 12/3/87 D: Terence Harrison W: Anthony Adams, Michael Keyes

While stranded on a desert butte with a cargo of explosives after their 100th crash together, Scrooge and Launchpad reminisce about their first crash. In search of the Lost City of Diamonds, Scrooge hired the stripling Launchpad and his "Sunchaser" at one cent a mile. The two crashed in a land at the Earth's center ruled by female Amazons who put them to work as kitchen help and bait for giant crabs. Escaping, they found the Amazons' former "babutas"--tiny males who'd run away to escape their unfair treatment--and the Lost City deep in a cave. Scrooge accidentally caused the City's destruction, and giant white bats, the City's legendary guardians, captured Scrooge and the Amazon Grunta. Launchpad convinced the Amazons and "babutas" to cooperate in order to help save them. Scrooge and Launchpad returned to the Earth's surface--with Scrooge's one diamond guaranteeing he'd turn a profit.

Though this tale is a bit lackluster and contrived (and, in light of "Top Duck", should really have been titled "Launchpad and Scrooge's First Crash"), it could have been much worse. It's certainly better than the later "Once Upon a Dime", because Launchpad (whose early life is a blank slate the events of which can be freely created) is the focus rather than Scrooge (who has a well-documented early history which must be respected in order for a tale of his past to be acceptable). The clever dialogue between Scrooge and the youthful, ultra-gung-ho Launchpad far outshines the rather uninspired "lost-city" adventure scenario and the forced role-reversal parody of Women's Lib.

Trying to fit this early meeting of Scrooge and Launchpad onto the existing timeline of comics and DT continuity is challenging, to say the least. It is made tolerably clear that Launchpad is a post-Barks creation in both artistic and "realistic" terms. The young Launchpad seems to be in his teens; presumably, his hiring by Scrooge (his "first job") came very soon after he left "The Flying McQuacks". Assuming he's now in his late 20's or early 30's, this adventure would seem to date from the mid- to late 70's--a neat explanation of why Launchpad never could have appeared in a Barks story. Scrooge and Launchpad may then have dropped out of contact, only to be reunited by Gyro in "Three Ducks of the Condor" (in which they do not seem to be strangers to each other). The only problem with this theory

is Scrooge's claim that finding the Lost City WILL make him the world's richest duck. Our only possible explanation: as Scrooge's adventures dwindled to almost nothing in the post-Barks, reprint-dominated 70's, Glomgold may temporarily have edged ahead of him in money count, prompting him to resume his globetrotting with this quest. If this idea is too heretical to accept, you can always blame Adams and Keyes.

(56) "Dime Enough for Luck" Joe=*** Chris=***
AD: 12/4/87 D: Terence Harrison SEd: Jymn Magon
W: Jymn Magon, Bruce Talkington, Mark Zaslove TP: Diane Duane

Scrooge tries to persuade Gladstone to stop trusting his luck so much, but Gladstone isn't impressed--after all, Scrooge himself has a "lucky charm", Old #1. After Magica hypnotizes Gladstone into breaking through the myriad of traps in Scrooge's money bin and stealing the dime, Gladstone's luck suddenly sours, since he's used his good luck for a wicked purpose. With Scrooge's sudden financial woes matching Gladstone's bad luck, the two journey to Magica's fortress. Gladstone must recover Old #1 himself to restore his luck--and, in spite of Magica's spells and his own bad luck, he does.

At long last, Gladstone lives on screen...OR DOES HE? There's a real question as to whether the Gladstone we see here really "is" the character who was so obnoxious that his own creator didn't care much for him. His famous luck is depicted accurately enough, but his attitude about it and the effects it has on others are markedly different. The worst sin he can be accused of (and a mild one at that, as presented here) is complacency, taking his luck in stride; his trademark gloating and bragging are absent, and Scrooge's reactions to Gladstone's luck seem more like irritated impatience with a personal quirk of the gander's than disgust with Gladstone as an anti-social force. Only once does Barks' gander really show up: beset by ill fortune and sitting in the gutter, Gladstone wails, "I'll have to get a job like normal people!" The rest of the time, we actually find ourselves sympathizing with him and hoping he'll get his luck back, instead of laughing at him, as we did when he lost his luck in Barks' stories. To paraphrase Archibald MacLeish's "Ars Poetica", Gladstone's luck here does not "mean", it simply "is"--and despite the well-crafted adventure (and the unprecedented meeting of Gladstone and Magica), one leaves the episode with a vague sense of unfulfillment.

What happened here? Perhaps Gladstone was a victim of the same syndrome that affected Lucy in the Peanuts TV specials. In her early TV appearances, Lucy was extremely nasty, loud and obnoxious; she was gradually toned down because her behavior was thought to be too abrasive. Perhaps Gladstone's character was softened because of the same fears. Rob Paulsen's Gladstone voice may also be a factor--it's simply too nice-sounding to be easily associated with the sneering gander we know and loathe. Whatever the "behind-the-scenes" story, this is sure to remain a hotly controversial episode.

(57) "Duck in the Iron Mask" Joe=**** Chris=****
AD: 12/7/87 D: David Block W: Donald Glut
Additional Voices: Count Roy=Maurice La Marche, Count Ray=Arte Johnson

Dewey, tired of being mistaken for one of his brothers and eager to assert his individuality, dresses in a bizarre outfit. The nephews accompany Scrooge and Launchpad to the tiny country of Monte Dumas, ruled by Scrooge's old fencing teacher, Count Roy, whom Scrooge hopes to persuade to invest in McDuck Industries. The ducks find that Count Roy has turned nasty and acquired a French accent as well. The bullying Captain Pietro (Black Pete) locks Scrooge and Launchpad in the prison tower and HD&L in the "uninvited-guest room". The imprisoned "Duck in the Iron Mask" breaks into Scrooge and Launchpad's cell and turns out to be Roy, whose evil twin brother Ray has usurped him. Dewey's knack for escape plans--and his discarding of his disguise to fool the boys' guard--helps Huey and Louie escape. A lively sword fight between the freed Scrooge, Launchpad and Roy and Ray, Pietro and their henchmen ends with the good guys triumphant. HD&L realize that being part of a team is special--especially when each of them is "one of a kind".

Taken merely as a parody of Dumas-style swashbucklers, this tale is memorable enough--the action scenes are crisp and funny, flashbacks (such as a long-ago fencing match between Roy and Scrooge) add to the episode's literary feel, and Black Pete is ideally cast as an evil "soldier of fortune". What really makes it special is its use of the nephews' indistinguishability as a plot device and--hard as it may be to believe--as a means of actually broadening the boys' character. Glut deserves the highest praise for the genuinely relevant way in which he weaves it into the fabric of the tale, a gambit that Barks never even attempted. Dewey's identity crisis is not merely a sidebar gag--the boys' alikeness plays a key role in the ducks' triumph. HD&L are aware of their triplication in a way they seldom were in Barks' stories, and Dewey's rebellion against the classic "the three of us are twins" situation causes his brothers no end of puzzlement ("What's he got against looking like us, anyhow?"). Taylor's voicing performance, one of her best in the series, gets the little ducks' emotions across loud and clear. Once you watch this, you may never look at HD&L the same way again--that's enough to make this an episode to remember.

The description of Dewey as "the best at coming up with escape plans" has some documented evidence to back it up. Dan Haley's "A Who's Who of HD&L" (The Barks Collector 11) reported that, in selected Barks stories in which the nephews were identified, Dewey was generally presented as "the most inquisitive, imaginative and crafty" of the three. Perhaps H&L's inability to think up a plan to rescue the other ducks was caused by temporary panic.

(58) "The Uncrashable Hindentanic" Joe=**** Chris=****
AD: 12/8/87 D: David Block W: Ken Koonce, David Wiemers
Additional Voices: Gloria Swansong=Joan Gerber, Quacks=Chuck McCann, Irwin Mallard=Terry McGovern, Burt Quackarach=Terry McGovern, John D. Rockefeather= Hal Smith, Carl Sagander=Frank Welker, Mr. Webworth=Chuck McCann, hijacker=Hal Smith, Captain Foghorn=Frank Welker

Scrooge bets Glomgold $1 million in investments that he can make money on any project of Flinty's choice. His mission: to make the old dirigible "Hindentanic" fly again. On the maiden Duckburg/London flight, Scrooge's family are the attendants, the passengers include disaster-movie director Irwin Mallard, "lounge lizard" Burt Quackarach,astronomer Carl Sagander, John D. Rockefeather (delivering honeybees to the Queen) and beak-transplant patient Mr. Webworth, and Temp-Cap's Captain Foghorn is at the helm (with Launchpad relegated to janitorial duties). Uninvited guests are present: silent-screen star Gloria Swansong is aboard with director friend Quacks, trying to wangle a part in Mallard's next movie, and Glomgold, disguised as a Mideast sheikh, plots sabotage. As the blimp flies into a meteor shower, Flinty causes chaos by cutting the propeller and loosing Rockefeather's bees, and Launchpad accidentally punctures the balloon while fixing the damage. The ducks build a fire to restore the lost air, but the gas bag catches fire, and Launchpad must crash the blimp on an iceberg. Scrooge's venture appears to be a disaster--until Mallard offers to cut him in on the "free disaster movie" he's filmed during the chaotic voyage.

Koonce and Wiemers are at the top of their form in this energetic and raucous parody of disaster movies. If possible, it's an even greater achievement than their earlier "Double-O-Duck", since it takes place solidly within an established Duck context, the struggle between Scrooge and Glomgold. Their script puts across a slew of good and so-bad-they're-good gags with a freshness that belies the somewhat derivative origins of the idea (cf. Airplane, 1980). The best gags seem to flow naturally from the characters themselves: not many other first-season episodes could have gotten away with gags about Mrs. Beakley's weight, but this one can--and does. The (intentionally) cardboard celebrity parodies are all funny and on target (though Swansong, the one featured most prominently, is the one young viewers are least likely to recognize), and it's only fitting to see Irwin Allen honored with a "guest appearance", in light of the many times DT has borrowed from or been influenced by Allen productions. Scrooge's bet with Glomgold adds just the right amount of suspense to the slapstick. Deeper analysis seems superfluous--this is a "kick back and enjoy it" romp, and it may provide more unadulterated fun than any other DT episode.

(59) "The Status Seekers" Joe=***½ Chris=***½
(Adaptation of "The Status Seeker" US 41, 1963)
AD: 12/9/87 D: Terence Harrison SEd: Jymn Magon
S: Carl Barks TP: Jymn Magon
Additional Voices: Charles Upstart III=Terry McGovern, Lady de Lardo=Joan Gerber, chief of Rippon Taro=Chuck McCann, Dr. Kooncen Wiemers=Terry McGovern

Scrooge desperately wants to join Duckburg "society" but learns from Charles Upstart III, president of the Association of Status Seekers, that one needs status to climb the social ladder. Remembering that he once owned the ultimate status symbol, the Mask of Kuthu-Lulu, Scrooge heads to the island of Rippon Taro with HD&L, Launchpad and Mrs. Beakley to buy it back from the island chief. Upstart and his hirelings, the "blueblood Beagle Boys", try to stop the ducks, but Scrooge gets the Mask back in exchange for "calorie-loaded peanut butter" that will put status-increasing pounds on the chief's physique. Back in Duckburg, Scrooge learns that, to be "accepted" as A.S.S. president, he'll have to ditch his uncouth friends. After he and his pals foil a last attempt by the bad guys to steal the Mask, Scrooge decides that being a snob isn't for him and tosses the Mask away--leaving it to be fought over by the unrepentant status seekers.

Though it makes some changes and opts for a more "pat" ending (with Scrooge renouncing "society" instead of being granted reluctant acceptance), this adaptation is still remarkably faithful to Barks' original in spirit and form, even surpassing it in some respects. The satirical focus shifts from Scrooge to the A.S.S. members (as the title change indicates), but the original's pokes at the subjectivity of status symbols remain intact. Instead of being "card-carrying" union members, the Beagle Boys are tanned, pseudo-sophisticated "inmates" of "Club Fed Penitentiary"--a funny idea reminiscent of Barks' swipes at the penal system. The change of the Candy-Striped Ruby to the hilariously ugly Mask of Kuthu-Lulu, a "total grossout" prized because the owner can afford to buy the best but has instead purchased the worst, is also an improvement, pointing out more sharply the absurdity of the status seekers' pretensions.

As in "Scrooge's Pet", the only Barks adaptation whose quality matches this one, many of Barks' situations and gags are duplicated with great fidelity. The "Pink Pakasso bum", the giant jellyfish and a pig villain named De Lardo (a snooty female snob who carts a huge diamond around on a wagon) are all present, and the chief's dialogue with HD&L about his idea of a status symbol ("a big tummy") is copied from Barks almost word-for-word. Several "camera shots" (e.g. the underwater ducks'-eye view of Upstart's pursuing yacht) appear to have been adapted from Barks' panels.

(60) "Nothing to Fear" Joe=*** Chris=***
AD: 12/14/87 D: David Block
W: Richard Merwin, Tedd Anasti, Patsy Cameron

When Magica's giant "fear cloud" envelops the McDuck mansion, all those entering the mansion grounds are menaced by their "worst fears". HD&L's video-game villain, Commander Gander, pursues them with ray-gun in hand, and their teacher warns them about the consequences of not doing their homework. Duckworth is menaced by the "limo monster" and a snarling vacuum, Doofus by a giant banana and Bully Beagle (the school bully), and Scrooge by bill collectors and the apparent disappearance of all the money in his money bin. Finally, HD&L and Scrooge are tormented by each other's nasty "opposites". Scrooge and HD&L finally decide to stop running and conquer their fears, and in the process of doing so, they turn Magica's spell against her--which happens to be her own greatest fear.

Without question, this is the strangest Magica story ever done in any medium--and one of the weirdest Duck stories ever. The episode has a dark, unpleasant tone the like of which hasn't been seen in a Duck story since Barks' "gothic" adventures of the late 40's. The feeling of paranoia is heightened by the large number of "point-of-view" shots, the characters' near-constant fleeing and screaming, and the general lack of cathartic physical action. The "anti"-Scrooge and HD&L are a memorable

climax to the "fear assault"--it's unsettling and not a little frightening to hear Scrooge snarl that he doesn't want to be HD&L's uncle anymore, or to see HD&L shake Scrooge down for money. Unfortunately, the denouement of the tale is a bit sloppy (why aren't Doofus and Duckworth made to purge their fears?), and the "happy ending" doesn't do much to remove one's uneasiness about the crueler aspects of the script.

The idea of an outside force creating illusions out of the subconscious which must be "faced" or coped with in order for the protagonists to free themselves from the force's grip has been well-explored by TV sci-fi series. The illusions in such cases don't usually proceed out of outright greed and malice like Magica's; far more often, they are a xenophobic defense mechanism (Star Trek's "Spectre of the Gun" (1968), Lost in Space's "Flight into the Future" (1967)) or more or less ethically neutral "field conditions" that the protagonists stumble into (Star Trek's "Shore Leave" (1966), Star Trek: The Next Generation's "Where No One Has Gone Before" (1987)). Most often, the tide turns when a character (Spock, the Robot, Scrooge) realizes that "the things we've been seeing aren't real" and cousels confrontation instead of passive acceptance or futile battle. "Nothing to Fear" and "Flight into the Future" both have interesting "twist endings" in which the illusion-producing entity turns upon itself. The alien machine that manufactures the fearsome illusions in "Flight" destroys itself when it creates reality in response to Will Robinson's successful facedown of his fears, an inversion of purpose strikingly similar to Magica's "fear cloud" suddenly turning against its creator. "Nothing to Fear" may be a "cartoon" version of these sci-fi episodes in terms of motivation and character reactions, but the ideas it plays with are basically the same.

(61) "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. McDuck" Joe=***½ Chris=***
AD: 12/23/87 D: Terence Harrison W: Michael Keyes, Margaret Osborne
Additional Voices: Jack the Tripper=Peter Cullen, Shedlock Jones=Clive Revill

Scrooge outbids London thief Jack the Tripper for an old trunk at a Duckburg auction, only to find that it contains old clothes and a sachet of cologne. When Scrooge sprays himself, he becomes "Uncle Moneybags", a money-flinging fool, and falls under the same spell thereafter every time he comes in contact with money. JTT, who needs the "Moneybags formula" to aid his crimes, trips the ducks up and grabs the cologne. In London, Scrooge and HD&L explore the mansion of the trunk's former owner, Dr. Jekyll, a reculsive scientist who died a spendthrift lunatic. With Scrooge under the "Moneybags" spell again, HD&L and master detective Shedlock Jones (an honorary Junior Woodchuck) find an antidote in Jekyll's mansion. HD&L and Jones foil an attempt by JTT (who is really Jones' archenemy, Professor Moodydoody, in disguise) to steal the Crown Jewels, and HD&L spray their granduncle back to frugal normalcy.

This potpourri of three favorite British themes is a bit like old John Bull himself--solid, if unspectacular. The Holmes parody is by far the best of the three. Benefitting hugely from Revill's fine voicing, Shedlock Jones is an amiable parody of the Baker Street wizard, pleasantly reminiscent of Shamrock Bones, Mickey's partner in the "Mickey and the Sleuth" stories. He even indulges in some self-parody: his trademark line is "Elementary, my dear Webson", and his apparently functional meerschaum is a fake, for he's "much too intelligent" to inhale smoke. The Jekyll-Hyde scenario is also quite good, with the audience treated to the unnatural sight of a free-spending Scrooge (certainly Scrooge's Hyde-side when it comes to money matters). The Jack the Ripper parody is rather weak, with entirely too many "tripping" gags included, but Cullen does provide a good voice for the criminal. A peculiarity here is Gladstone's brief appearance at the auction: his "accidental" bid for a trunk that proves to be full of money is what stirs Scrooge to bidding action.

(62) "Once Upon a Dime" Joe=CRASH Chris=CRASH
(Semi-adaptation of "The Great Steamboat Race" US 11, 1955)
AD: 12/24/87 D: David Block
S: Richard Esckilsen TP: Ken Koonce, David Wiemers (a second print apparently exists which credits Koonce and Wiemers as "writers" and doesn't mention Esckilsen)
Additional Voices: young Scrooge=Pat Fraley, Scrooge's father=Don Messick, Scrooge's mother=June Foray, Uncle Catfish=Peter Renaday, Old Man Ribbit=William Callaway

As he buffs Old #1 on "dime-polishing day", Scrooge tells his family the story of how the dime served as the foundation of his fortune. He tells of his youthful applications of his father's advice to "work smarter, not harder", ranging from using a device to shine many shoes at once to save up money to emigrate from Scotland to America, to helping his Uncle Catfish win a riverboat race with crooked Old Man Ribbit for the title to Cornpone Gables. We also learn about his first encounter with Ma Beagle and her "Western outlaw" boys, and his Klondike mining days. As Scrooge tells it, Old #1 was indirectly responsible for him finding oil on worthless land sold to him by a swindler. He admits, though, that he never really "felt rich" until his family came to live with him.

The absolute pits. This supposed "biography" of Scrooge is inaccurate, unfunny, and has almost nothing to recommend it to anyone. Scrooge's story begins promisingly enough, with several actual events in his early life depicted accurately--his use of the shoe-shining device from the Vic Lockman/Carl Barks story "The Invisible Intruder" (US 44, 1963) and his chipping mud off a ditchdigger's boots to earn Old #1, as in the Tony Strobl-drawn "Getting That Healthy, Wealthy Feeling" (US 50, 1964)--but it's straight downhill from there. The steamboat-race scenario is an almost total waste, Scrooge's Klondike days are barely touched upon, the "old-time" Ma Beagle looks just like the modern version (has she found the Fountain of Youth?), and the anecdote of businessman Scrooge using elephants to stamp worthless African coal into diamonds stretches credulity to the breaking point. For all the episode's ineptitude as biography, however, the tale's biggest boner occurs before Scrooge begins his story. Scrooge finds Old #1 missing and learns that HD&L took it, replacing it with their "lucky quarter"; the boys naively explain that "it's a quarter...that makes it 2½ times luckier than your dime!" After all of DT's "lucky dime" episodes, not to mention Barks' Magica stories, how could HD&L not realize the dime's importance to Scrooge? There's just no excuse for a blunder in characterization of this magnitude. The discriminating viewer would be well-advised to stay away from this, without a doubt the worst first-season episode.

Consider this to be DT's version #2 of the circumstances surrounding Scrooge's emigration. Here, Scrooge's parents ("McPapa" and "McMama"--is Scrooge's home country Scotland or McDonaldland?) are left behind while a teenaged Scrooge sails for America. Far from being a simple farmer, the elder McDuck appears to be--simply a bagpipe player. (Can you say "cliche"?...)

(63) "Spies in Their Eyes" Joe=*** Chris=***
AD: Christmas Day 1987 D: David Block W: Sharman DiVono, Bruce Reid Schaefer
Additional Voices: Cinnamon Teal=Haunani Minn, Victor Luzer=Bernie Kopell

On shore leave in Singapore, Donald is brainwashed by the hypnotic stare of the lovely spy Cinnamon Teal into stealing the master computer link of the top-secret McDuck Industries experimental submarine aboard his carrier. Cinnamon trades the device to the villainous spy Victor Luzer for some self-incriminating documents (which she finds are fake) while Donald, jailed for espionage and treason, awaits court-martial. Scrooge, HD&L and Cinnamon must cooperate to help prove Donald's innocence and stop Victor from escaping with the sub.

The first of a consecutive pair of Donald-Navy stories, this straight-forward tale has more of the flavor of a 40's B-movie than anything else. The episode's link to Barks is stronger than it appears at first glance. Barks worked on the storyboards for an unproduced World War II cartoon, "Madam XX", featuring a seductive Aryan

spyess who "attracts" Army courier Donald using "Fall of Man" perfume. Though Cinnamon Teal is a distinctly Oriental duck in the tradition of Milton Caniff's "Dragon Lady", her spiritual link to Madam XX is obvious. Her fellow spy, Victor Luzer, is a worthy successor to P.J. McBrine, Porkman de Lardo, Foulcrook and the rest of Barks' pantheon of nasty pig villains. His name could be a takeoff on Casablanca's Victor Laszlo. Kopell's voice for him is an interesting reprise of Conrad Siegfried, the Germanic KAOS agent he played on Get Smart.

Admiral Grimmitz has a larger role here than in his previous appearances. In contrast to his fairly "straight" early performances, he's presented more comically, with a touch of Dr. Strangelove added to his persona. He fools around with "Pentagon-issue naval battle simulators" (toy boats), and more than once he declares, "I just love it when things go KABLOOEY!" Stereotyped, but amusing. This characterization of the Admiral is used in the next episode as well.

(64) "All Ducks on Deck" Joe=**** Chris=****
AD: 12/30/87 D: Terence Harrison
S: Patsy Cameron, Tom Naugle TP: John Semper, Tedd Anasti
Additional Voices: Phantom Blot=Peter Cullen, Ensign Plover=Mark Taylor

Impressed by Donald's tale of how he piloted his carrier through stormy Pinball Reef and earned "yet another" medal, HD&L stow away when Scrooge and Launchpad fly Donald out to the carrier. Seeing him bawled out for being late, they realize that he made up all the stories about his heroism. Scrooge and Launchpad, investigating a lack of reports from Scrooge's fishing fleet on Cat Island, are captured by the Phantom Blot, who plans to steal a new experimental jet (with invisibility-creating cloaking device) when it lands on Donald's carrier. HD&L's attempts to make Donald a hero using devices built with the help of the Junior Woodchuck Guidebook result in Donald being reduced to peeling potatoes. The Blot's "Agent X" (Ensign Plover, Admiral Grimmitz' right-hand man) steals the jet, but Scrooge, Launchpad and the jailed fishermen escape and foil the Blot's plans. Scrooge and Launchpad fly the jet (which Launchpad accidentally made invisible) back to the carrier, where Donald and HD&L use flares to guide it safely in. HD&L present Donald with a "medal" made out of computer parts as a token of their admiration.

Because of the memorable (and completely unexpected) appearance of the Phantom Blot, this would be one for the books even if it were "Grade Z". It's much better than that, though, and no small part of its success is due to the clever use of Donald, whose performance here is by far his most Barksian of the first season. As in so many of Barks' ten-pagers, Donald's tale-telling and self-importance get out of hand and cause him no end of grief. There's some superb animation as well, especially in the opening Pinball Reef sequence: the towering waves are cleverly "personalized", and the scenes in which Donald grapples with a giant octopus and nonchalantly pilots the carrier through the reef are priceless.

An evaluation of the Blot's performance can only be subjective--it all depends on which Blot you were first exposed to. Fans of the Gottfredson Blot of 1939 are likely to get a shock, while those who grew up on the Blot of the 60's will be delighted. In his maniacal behavior, hilarious harangues and grandiose plans, the DT Blot is much closer to the modern version--if anything, he's even more overplayed. Not even his monologues on becoming the ultimate Western badman in "The Phantom Blot Meets Super Goof" (Phantom Blot 2, 1965) displayed the kind of egotism he shows here. It must be admitted, though, that the Blot's ultramegalomania matches the episode's unserious tone quite well. Cullen's rasping voice characterization seems more appropriate for the modern Blot, too, and besides, what other kind of Blot could one expect to see in a Harrison-directed episode? The Blot's overacting works wonderfully in tandem with the loose animation of his actions. To see this classic villain animated in any form is almost worth the 48-year wait. Since he's almost certainly a one-shot DT character (he could hardly top this performance!), this episode is a "must" for any Disney fan's collection.

(65) "Ducky Horror Picture Show" Joe=* Chris=**
AD: 12/31/87 D: Terence Harrison
W: Richard Merwin, Tedd Anasti, Patsy Cameron
Additional Voices: Mr. Wolf=Dick Gautier

Scrooge renovates an old pierside building into a convention center and rents it to the mild-mannered Mr. Wolf--who's really the werewolf president of "Monsters Unanimous", a collection of fun-loving movie-monster parodies (Quackimodo, Count Drakeula, Quackenstein, the Blob, the Creature from the Blue Lagoon, etc.) who lay waste to the center and their living accomodations at Scrooge's mansion. Scrooge faces the first business failure of his life, and to make matters worse, the monsters picket his monster-movie marathon at the Scroogerama Dome, claiming unfair treatment of monsters. Scrooge manages to convince them that everybody really loves monsters, and gets back his investment by hiring the monsters to perform "live".

Here, what you see is what you get...specifically, you get a pretty standard parody of those lovable Hollywood monsters, complete with ominous organ peals on the soundtrack and an abundance of hit-or-miss parodic jokes. What few original ideas appear are generally fairly successful: the Creature from the Blue Lagoon produces gurgling and bubbles from a party horn, the giant ape Ping Pong plays with a huge paddleball racket, and the monsters' big pink bus (obviously inspired by The Muppet Movie (1979)) has a skeleton of a greyhound painted on its side. The topical subtheme about monster rights is amusing, and the episode features an unusual musical ending, with the monster "chorus line" singing a sort of parody of "Let Me Entertain You". By and large, though, there isn't much here you haven't seen somewhere before.

(66) "Till Nephews Do Us Part" Joe=**** Chris=***½
AD: New Year's Day 1988 D: Terence Harrison
W: Ken Koonce, David Wiemers
Additional Voices: Millionaira Vanderbucks=Tress MacNeille

Scrooge falls head over webs in love with the "wealthiest woman in the world", Millionaira Vanderbucks, and eventually proposes a "merger"--but all Milly is really interested in is Scrooge's money. HD&L and Webby overhear Milly's plan to fire the servants and send HD&L to military school and Webby to finishing school. They plot with Mrs. Beakley to get her to think twice. On a trip in search of the "lost relish of Malaria" (lost relics of Malaysia), the boys do all they can to make Milly's life miserable, but not even Scrooge and Milly going over a waterfall together can stop the wedding plans. The ceremony, held at a bank, attracts a bevy of DuckTales characters. At the "vaultar", Scrooge finally realizes that Milly is marrying him for his money--and his old love Goldie, whom the kids had secretly invited, bursts out of a huge cake and chases him for being untrue to her. When Glomgold comforts Milly, she promptly starts chasing him.

The final first-season episode is part romantic parody, part cameo orgy, with a conservative estimate of at least 25 to 30 familiar faces (nothing like the "every character ever seen on DuckTales" claimed in the Studio synopsis) visible at the wedding. This was clearly a "let's have some fun" project, reflected in the atypical uses of some characters. Glomgold has rarely been used in such a humorous (and relatively benign) way, and Ma Beagle and her boys, who crash the wedding disguised as bridesmaids, are allowed to get away with robbing the bank at the episode's end. Though it's tough to stomach all the financial pet names Scrooge and Milly throw at each other, Scrooge's courtship and impending "matrimoney" provide some very funny moments, the highlights being a funny "Lover's Park" scene (Scrooge crooning stock prices "sotto voce" to Milly) and Scrooge's nervous proposal (he stammers, "It's rare when a woman compounds my interest daily" and "There comes a time in a man's life when he must incorporate..."). As reflected in the "treasure" Scrooge finds (a jar of relish!), the "adventure" aspect of the episode is pure farce. Unquestionably, the filigree and trimmings overshadow the story--as they were quite obviously meant to.

Familiar faces at the McDuck/Vanderbucks wedding include: HD&L, Webby (a disconsolate bridesmaid scattering money a la rose petals), Duckworth, Mrs. Beakley, Launchpad, Gyro (with his automatic rice-thrower), Donald (Scrooge's best man in dress uniform), Goldie, Glomgold, Doofus, Gladstone, Magica, Poe, Ma Beagle, Burger, Bigtime, Bankjob, Captain Foghorn, the Duchess of Swansylvania, Lord Battmounten and Percival, Webra Walters, Ripcord and Loopy McQuack, the Grand Kishki, Captain Tann, J. Gander Hoover and Feathers Galore, Gloria Swansong and Quacks, Carl Sagander, Irwin Mallard, John D. Rockefeather, Burt Quackarach, Lady de Lardo, Robin Lurch, Shedlock Jones, and (most bizarre of all) two rich pigs who had a bit part in "The Money Vanishes". Apologies to all those folks we missed--blame the finite powers of VCR "pause".

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As precise as we may seem, we're still not complete. Like the long-lost Treasure of the Golden Suns, there may exist a DT curio which still eludes us--a 1987 TV documentary on the making of the series. If anyone out there has information about or (dare we hope) a videotape of this program, we'd like to hear from you.

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ANNOUNCEMENT

Due to the space crunch in this issue, the "Duckburg Data" column is being published separately on a 8½x11 sheet which all subscribers will find inserted in the envelope used to send this issue. As a bonus, the reverse side of the sheet has a detailed list of clubs, magazines, etc. of interest to Barks and Disney fans. Non-subscribers who would like to receive this sheet can request one free if they'll send me a business-sized self addressed stamped envelope. Sorry for any inconvenience this causes.

DUCKTALES: in the beginning

by Jim Korkis

In 1947, talented writer and artist Carl Barks created the character of Scrooge McDuck for a DONALD DUCK comic book story entitled "Christmas on Bear Mountain". Like many of Barks's creations, Scrooge, the penny-pinching uncle of Donald Duck, was intended as a one shot character. Yet six years later in 1953, he was appearing in his own best selling comic book.

At the height of his popularity, Jack Hannah was the director in charge of the animated duck unit at Disney Studios where he was turning out high quality Donald Duck cartoons.

"We did consider Scrooge McDuck for use in a short," Hannah stated in 1978, "I recall vaguely somebody thinking that a character that went wild over money wasn't funny. I remember discussing this with somebody and we felt that the greed for money seemed to be the reason we didn't use Scrooge. It was at the time that we were also stopping production on the shorts so that ended any further discussion. Even though he was very funny in comic book form, we decided he wasn't strong enough at the time."

As a foreshadowing of the later DUCK TALES, Scrooge McDuck eventually made his animated film debut with Huey, Dewey and Louie. SCROOGE MCDUCK AND MONEY was released in 1967. It was written by Bill Berg, directed by Ham Luske and featured animation by Ward Kimball and Julius Svendsen among others. The Technicolor cartoon ran sixteen minutes and forty-two seconds. The voice of Scrooge was provided by Bill Thompson, the well-remembered Disney voice man who also supplied the voices for Mr. Smee in PETER PAN, the White Rabbit in ALICE IN WONDERLAND and the Little Ranger in the Donald Duck cartoons.

Mel Leven wrote the music and lyrics for the songs including "Bonnie Columns", "Its Gotta Circulate", "Billion Dollars", "Balancing The Budget", and "The Remarkable Sum of A Dollar Ninety-Five".

"Since Scrooge is a little Scot duck, some of the music had a bagpipe drone in the background for extra flavor. At other times it had a brassy, fast moving sound, like money moving from hand to hand and circulating through an economy," claimed Leven just before the short was released. The singing group, the Mellomen, backed up Scrooge's vocals.

The storyline had the three nephews showing up at Scrooge's money vault to find out how they can become as wealthy as Scrooge himself. When they arrive, Scrooge is dancing between stacks of money and hugging and kissing the stuff. The nephews have brought their piggy bank with a dollar ninety-five in it for Scrooge to save for them so they can become rich.

This offer launches Scrooge into an illustrated, singing lecture about budgets, inflation, the history of money, and the vastness of actual wealth. At the end of the lecture, he explains that they have invested their money wisely but there will be a three cent fee for his time and consultation. "Nothing good is ever free," he smiles.

This educational featurette had a redesigned Scrooge who looked very much like Ludwig von Drake and was primarily shown in schools. It looked like animated stardom had escaped Barks's famous creation.

It wasn't until 1983 that Scrooge popped up again as an animated character. In MICKEY'S CHRISTMAS CAROL, he got to play the part of Dickens' Ebenezer Scrooge (the inspiration for his creation) in a re-telling of the classic Christmas story. Audiences expecting to see Mickey Mouse's first starring appearance in twenty years were surprised to see Scrooge the star and the Mouse little more than a supporting player.

In 1985, Michael Eisner announced that, "The time has come for Walt Disney Pictures...to be a competitor on network television and to participate in improving the quality of our children's programs for our present generation of children."

Disney entered the Saturday morning arena with two series, THE WUZZLES and THE GUMMY BEARS, which ended up playing opposite each other. The major surprise was that Disney farmed out the animation overseas to TMS (Tokyo Movie Shinsha). Still, the shows were well received by critics and the audience so Disney decided to invade the syndication market where there was more money to be made.

They didn't want to risk their top of the line characters so they looked for strong "second banana" characters that might have a connection to one of their major characters. So Scrooge and the nephews were chosen. Donald Duck was away in the Navy and left the nephews in the care of Scrooge.

The adventures written by Carl Barks seemed like a natural to compete with the fast moving, action packed syndicated shows. "Barks was never really consulted," stated Tom Ruzicka, associate producer of DUCK TALES, in a 1987 interview, "although the show was initially based on the concept of doing Scrooge McDuck and the nephews. We discovered that a lot of stuff that made wonderful comics wouldn't translate into the 80s or into animation, so we started evolving new characters and other things to contemporize the show. As we did that, the stories got further and further away from the comics, although a few episodes are lifted right out of them."

The original concept was for the show to be an hour long and new character Launchpad McQuack had his own segment. However, when Disney discovered that it was difficult to sell an hour long series in syndication, they cut the show to a half hour. By then, Launchpad had developed as a popular character and he became incorporated into the final cast. The famous Beagle Boys were now given names like Big Time, Burger, Bouncer and Baggy. (Other Beagles following in the 'B" tradition would be called Backbite, Bankshot, Baron Von, Bushwack and Baffling.) Instead of Daisy Duck's nieces April, May and June, there was a new female character called Webbigail (Webby) who was the granddaughter of Mrs. Beakley, the governess for the nephews. Rounding out the cast was Duckworth, Scrooge's manservant.

"We are confident that DUCK TALES will be as successful in syndication as Disney's other cartoons," claimed Bob Jacquemin, the senior vice president of marketing for Buena Vista Productions. When questioned about using TMS for the animation of Disney characters, he responded that, "this system will enable us to produce a considerably higher quality product than can be found in the syndication market today."

Michael Webster, vice president of Television Animation for Disney, emphasized that, "It is no cheaper for us to do it over there, but they have a talent pool of fantastic draftsmen that we don't. We have some talented artists over here, but nowhere near enough to handle the massive amounts of footage we need. And the work ethic in Japan is phenomenal. They all work six day weeks, and probably at least 10 hours days. Some of them work all night. I've gone into the studio in the morning and seen guys sleeping under their desks; it's unbelievable."

As the series developed, Scrooge softened. Associate Producer Ruzicka stated that Scrooge "wouldn't be a very endearing character if all the depth he had was an interest in money."

Story editor Jymn Magon claimed that "With DUCK TALES, we wanted to get into a gutsier story sense. Our focus was on adventure and I think it shows."

DUCK TALES premiered with a two hour special on September 18, 1987 in 150 markets covering ninety-three percent of the country. Each episode was budgeted at $300,000 and Disney was risking more then twenty million dollars. The regular series began September 21st. The success of the show opened the floodgates for Disney to invade syndication. Even Scrooge himself never dreamed of all the money waiting to be made and it is only just beginning.

EDITORIAL

"They blew it!" When Joe Torcivia blurted this during a recent conversation we had about the Disney Implosion, I had to agree his statement was a fair assessment. But there is more to the recent shake-up at Disney Comics than meets the eye. It is a symptom of pervasive problems with Disney's approach to doing business during the Eisner era.

Disney's near miraculous turn-around since the new management took over in 1984 could turn most anyone's head. In its aftermath hubris, what Michael Eisner terms the masters of the universe syndrome, has infected Team Disney. They behave as if they know more about everything than anyone else and can do no wrong. Prince of the Magic Kingdom contains an illuminating anecdote about Disney executives behaving arrogantly during meetings with network television executives despite at that time having had very little success producing TV programs.

Arrogant presumption of this sort explains why Disney, with no experience publishing comics, could decide not to renew Gladstone's license in the belief that they could more successfully produce and market the comics themselves. Before a single issue of the new Disney Comics line had even been distributed, Disney executives were rumored to be confidently predicting that in a short time they would be competing on an equal footing with industry leaders Marvel and DC. After all, they were Disney--how could they go wrong?

Given Disney's reputation for synergy and marketing savvy, the litany of mistakes, gaffes and blunders that bedeviled Disney Comics is suprising and embarrassing: the $1.50 cover price crippled sales to their target audience of kids and parents. The refusal to return original art or pay royalties alienated talent. The line of graphic albums was mishandled and sputtered to a halt. Promised publicity on the Disney Channel and Disney Afternoon never materialized; plans to sell the comics at K-Marts, the theme parks and Disney Stores went nowhere. Some of the new material was dismal (most pointedly the Roger Rabbit titles and early issues of DuckTales) and foreign licensees refused to reprint it (a significant source of revenue for the studio). Favortism in hiring created cliques and tension among the staff.

Disney never had a committment to publishing comics beyond a desire for profit. When it became clear marketing Disney Comics would require more than just publishing the books and hope they sold, it was decided to scrap the line except for the duck titles. Len Wein and his associates were sacked, indirectly scapegoating them for the whole mess.

Wein et al bear quite a bit of blame, but the chief culprit was Disney's management and its lack of strategic planning in starting this venture. With Bob Foster gone, Disney Comics is at a crossroad. Hopefully this lull will give Disney a chance to reflect upon its mistakes and perhaps profit from them. Please?

REVIEWS

by Brent Swanson

DISNEY'S GOLDEN AGE: MINING THE GOLD

Talking Animals and Other People: The Autobiography of One of Animation's Legendary Figures, by Shamus Culhane (St. Martin's Press, hardcover, $24.95).

Walt Disney and Assorted Other Characters: An Unauthorized Account of the Early Years at Disney's, by Jack Kinney (Harmony Books, NY, hardcover, $17.95).

Practically every year, somebody writes a book about either Adolf Hitler or Walt Disney; some biographers have almost meshed the two men into one. Now two veterans who sweated in the Disney shop have come forward to offer us the closest and most candid views yet of the man and his studio.

You probably won't find either book on sale at Disneyland. Culhane's book has had such poor distribution that you'll be lucky to find it anywhere, a galling fate for what is one of the best animation histories ever written.

Shamus Culhane began his career as an errand boy at the Bray Studio; he worked at several major and minor animation shops, eventually heading Famous Studios. From 1935 through '39 he labored at Disney's, an experience that changed his life. "I am grateful to have been part of that era," he writes, "because it has enhanced the quality of my life ever since."

The working conditions and artistic values of Disney became (and remain) the yardstick by which Culhane measures all other studios. Model sheets, accompanied by lucid and ample commentary, are used to illustrate what the author perceives as the weaknesses or strengths of other studios' techniques. These exhibits are abetted by Culhane's pungent, often hilarious text.

Walt Disney and his studio receive their share of criticism. "Disney had the need to express his own personality to the exclusion of anybody else's ideas about humor," Culhane writes. "He had the combined iron will and seductiveness to bring his artists to accept his needs and relinquish their's."

Culhane devotes much space to the unrest that resulted in the strike of 1941 and singles out Art Babbitt as the unsung tragic hero of the affair. According to Culhane, Babbitt and Disney were victims of one another's temperaments, both of which exploded during the strike.

In contrast to Culhane's chronological account, Jack Kinney's book is a breezy, discursive overview of the author's twenty-six years at Disney. Kinney began as an in-betweener, graduated to story development, and later headed the "Goofy" unit where he directed the legendary "how-to" shorts.

Kinney's is a book of personalities, dynamically sketched in words and pictures by an expert storyman. The man clearly loves his subjects and his memories of them, but he harbors no illusions, especially in regard to "the boss." Walt Disney comes across as a hard-driving, sometimes hard-drinking, ego-driven authoritarian. Like Culhane, Kinney concedes that this personality may have been a necessary evil: "Even the guys who hated Walt's guts admired him for raising animation from a crude craft to an art form."

Culhane and others have told us of Disney's animation techniques; Kinney shows us day-to-day life in the studio. Sometimes it was as mundane as most jobs outside the "glamor industries." Studio life was enlivened by practical jokes, rough-housing, Walt's changing moods, and the parade of colorful personalities (among whom was Carl Barks; page 61 features the least-ugly Barks caricature ever published).

Much of the fun ended with the strike in 1941. Kinney laments, "The studio was never the same when it was over. Walt cut off privileges, and Disney's became a very hard-nosed place." Comradary was replaced by stratification. The formation of a board of senior animators, better known today as the "Nine Old Men," was very much resented by other studio employees, as were Walt's parasites, whom Kinney refers to as "kiss-asses... umbrella-holders, arm-squeezers, winkies, smilies." By the late fifties, the studio was a full-fledged bureaucracy. After Walt's passing, "only the magic name of Disney kept it afloat."

Careful readers will note several disparities between these two books and the better known Disney Animation: The Illusion of Life. For that matter, Culhane and Kinney themselves are not always in agreement. But even if they don't all share the view of Walt's face enshrined by "Mickey Mouse" sunbeams, they would probably all agree with Kinney's assessment that "The Golden Age of Animation was a glorious experience."

TOUCHING DISNEY WITH ASBESTOS GLOVES

The Disney Touch: How a Daring Management Team Revived an Entertainment Empire, by Ron Grover (Business One Irwin, hardcover, $22.95).

In the movie version of The Wrong Box, Sir Ralph Richardson plays a social pariah who cheerily spouts facts in lieu of intelligent conversation. He's a nice gentleman, but a dreadful bore. Chances are he'd be delighted by The Disney Touch, which is a big collection of facts recited to no particular end.

Ron Grover, L.A. bureau chief of Business Week magazine, is no slouch of a writer. Stylistically, his chapters read like news articles, brusque and to the point. His coverage of Disney's new management and its tactics is meticulous, right down to the ages and social backgrounds of the participants.

But this "news weekly" article style is the book's undoing. Objectivity and hard facts are required of news articles, but in a book, these virtues must be abetted by analysis and must support a unifying thesis. Grover's book promises to tell us how Disney's new management revived the company. But he only charts the moves; he fails to show us how they worked.

Furthermore, the book provides up-to-the-minute news of the 1991 downturn, but fails to connect this conclusion to the previous chapters. It's as though the finale of a horror story has been tacked onto a romance novel. The same lack of unity can be found in the chapter titled "Mr. Spielberg Comes to Toontown," which begins with the acquisition of Who Censored Roger Rabbit? and somehow concludes with Warren Beatty's departure. What was the rationale of taking us from that point A to that point B?

Throughout most of the book, Grover simply repeats what he's been told or what he's read; therefore, if any point-of-view is present, it's Disney corporate's. Or it's what Disney corporate wants us to believe. When Grover quotes from "The Katzenberg Memo" (Disney's modern version of Gunther Lessing's diatribes) as though it were sincerity incarnate, you know he's been buffaloed.

You might also raise your brows at Grover's habit of rating all movies and talent in terms of "tickets sold." This may be the prevailing habit of Hollywood in general, but an insightful writer should look within something, not just at it. Disney's treatment of Return to Oz should have been fertile ground for analysis. But all Grover tells us is that Disney's management did what most other "new management" teams do: write-off the works of their predecessors. Doesn't that negate Grover's

contention that Disney's new management is "daring"?

At best, The Disney Touch is an adequate overview of Disney's financial ups and downs; however, the "Great American Disney Corporate Biography" is still waiting to be written.

DISNEYDOM

October 11, 1991 Carl Barks received a Disney Legends Award in recognition of his contribution to the Disney mythos. Julie Andrews, Fess Parker and Sterling Holloway were among the others honored at the ceremony.

Disney's fortunes of late have been uneven. Hand That Rocks the Cradle, Father of the Bride and Beauty and the Beast were solid hits, while Billy Bathgate and Newsies were disappointments. Euro Disneyland so far has fallen short of projected attendance. The Jim Henson deal collapsed. Donald Duck and Mickey Mouse are the only remaining comic strips. But prospects are bright for the Anaheim Westcot project and the Disney Stores and Disney Afternoon syndicated package are huge successes.

Alladin, the next animated feature, is due this Christmas and a whole string of animated movies are planned for the rest of the decade. Goof Troop is the next new Disney Afternoon series (Bonkers was bumped to '93). Pixar is making the first all computer animated feature for Disney.

As an entree into publishing Disney purchased Discover Magazine (reportedly for fifteen milion dollars). It also cancelled the licenese of Mondadori in Italy and started doing comics there out of a wholly-owned subsidary. And in a partnership with the Brazilian Abril Disney has consolidated all Spanish-language Disney comics.

Meanwhile, Disney Comics (begun in 1990) has been a fiasco. The line is now on cruise control following Bob Foster's departure for Gutenberghus. At this point anything could happen--the most persistent rumors are of a partnership, with Gladstone, Gutenberghus and even Western Publishing as potential candidates!

In the aftermath of the Disney debacle, Gladstone secured a license for a monthly series of albums to reprint chronologically all the ten pagers. It may continue into the rest of the Barks canon.

Bruce Hamilton and Russ Cochran dissolved their partnership, with Hamilton receiving the rights to the names Gladstone/Another Rainbow and the lithograph series. Cochran was given all posters, albums and comics still in backstock, including the Barks Library. For details: P.O. Box 469 West Plains MO 65775 for a copy of Cochran's catalog.

Recent deaths include Jack Kinney (director of the Goofy 'how to' cartoons) on Feb. 4, 1992 and Arthur Babbit (a key figure in the 1941 strike) on Mar. 4, 1992.

Barks has ceased doing oils of the ducks. Future releases from Hamilton will be from a stockpile he has built up of mini-lithographs of the 1970s oils assuring a steady supply for years to come.

Panels no.2, with a Barks interview, is still in print. $6 (plus $3 postage/handling) from: John Benson 205 W. 80th Street #2B New York NY 10024.

Harvey's new Tom and Jerry series have reprinted some of Barks' stories of Benny Burro, Barney Bear and Happy Hound (but with dialogue changes in at least one instance).

Disney fandom seems to be heating up of late, with the emergence of The "E" Ticket and new fanzines forthcoming from Jeffrey Pierce and Paul Anderson. The Danish Carl Barks & Co. even had its first new issue in quite some time (no.19). The stream of insider autobiographies continues with Van Arsdale France's Window on Main Street, Bill Justice's Justice for Disney and the forthcoming Disney's Men, Women and Mouse by Carl Fallberg.